



Elmina, 'The Little Europe':

European Impact and Cultural Resilience

Joseph K. Adjaye

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First published in Ghana 2018
by **Sub-Saharan Publishers**
P.O.Box 358
Legon-Accra
Ghana
Email: saharanp@africaonline.com.gh
www.subsaharanpublishers.com

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ISBN 978-9988-550-96-7

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Acknowledgments

I am indebted to my brother Dr. Robert E. Adjaye for urging me to undertake this task, my wife Dinah for her dedicated editorial assistance, and my sister Rose Priddy for her input in parts of Chapter 9. I am profoundly grateful to the Honourable Fritz Baffour for the passionate Foreword to this book that he wrote and to the several people who graciously reviewed the manuscript, especially Dr. Nana Ato Arthur, Professor Brigid Maa Sackey and Professor Robert Addo-Fening. I also owe a debt of gratitude to my late mother Elizabeth Ulzen Adjaye, who instilled in me the love of the family past, and especially the Elmina past.

Preface

This book has arisen out of the need for a simple, short readable account of the history of Elmina, its 500-year contact with Europeans, and the immediate and enduring impact that those interactions have had on the town. While recalling the glory that once was the Elmina that glowed as the first urban centre of the Gold Coast, the book unavoidably echoes a nostalgic past against the background of the present decadence and neglect, laying bare the yearning need for the town's resurgence.

Elmina, 'The Little Europe', covers a number of topics—the development of indigenous states and especially their kingship institution; the centuries of European contact with local communities; the slave trade and the place of slavery-related monuments such as castles in the infamous trade; the rise of Euro-Africans; the transformation of a little town called Elmina into a cosmopolitan centre dubbed *The Little Europe*; the legacy of the long period of European interaction with the indigenes; change and continuity in our cultural heritage; and other related subjects. This is a story that resonates with the historical experience of other coastal areas in Ghana. Indeed, Elmina's historical unfolding offers a model for that of other towns like Cape Coast or segments of larger places such as Osu in Accra.

This book has been specially written to appeal to a wide audience: locals from Elmina seeking an understanding of their history, visitors from the African diaspora and elsewhere yearning for insights into their ancestral heritage, as well as the general readership. Senior secondary school and college students will equally find this a useful resource.

Foreword

Elmina, traditionally known as Edina and sometimes called Amankwaakrom, thus named after its founding ancestor Kwaa Amankwaa--three different names for a singularly historic town in the Central Administrative Region of the West African Republic of Ghana on the Gulf of Guinea, overlooking the South Atlantic Ocean—is the subject matter of this important book.

Elmina, Edina or Amankwaakrom, according to many sources, has been in existence since the early fourteenth century in the Common Era. The town's rise to prominence started in 1471 with the arrival on its shores of a fleet of Portuguese ships manned by hundreds of mariners in search of gold and their subsequent construction of Castelo de São Jorge da Mina, St. George's Castle of Elmina. Since then the history of sub-Saharan Africa cannot be fully told without acknowledging the influence and impact of this town on the socio-economic and political firmament of the continent, Europe, the Americas and the world at large. It was from Elmina/Edina/Amankwaakrom that the eyes of Europe zeroed in on Africa's immense wealth in human and natural resources, which eventually resulted in the infamous trans-Atlantic slave trade and culminated in the colonization of almost all of tropical Africa. This was the town that served as the main thoroughfare for the monumental dislocation of Black Africans to the "New World" of the Americas and beyond. Today it is likewise the Mecca of most sons and daughters of the African diaspora, but that's not all; Elmina/Edina/Amankwaakrom is also an embodiment of the traditions, culture, trials, tribulations and triumphs of the African peoples, ancient and modern.

There have been many attempts to tell Elmina's story in written form, some successful and some too mundane to be taken seriously. This study by a true son of Elmina/Edina/Amankwaakrom, an eminent and leading historian of Ghana

and the African diaspora, Professor Joseph K. Adjaye, is a concise and succinct account of this unique town's history from a truly internal perspective—the development of West Africa's first urban and cosmopolitan centre that earned the sobriquet “Little Europe”, the immediate and enduring legacy of the 500-year contact with the Portuguese, Dutch and British, the transformations that these interactions engendered in Elmina's political and social institutions, the resiliency of the town's cultural heritage, etc. It is these and other related subjects that constitute the crux of this long overdue book. Professor Adjaye brings to bear in this work not only the meticulous analysis of an accomplished historian but also his intimate knowledge of Elmina society as a captain of one of the traditional para-military Asafo companies. Indeed, he provides deep and rare insights into the historical unfolding of perhaps the most significant tourism destination of diasporan Africans, the location of two of UNESCO's World Heritage sites and a unique and veritable living museum that Elmina is.

As a citizen of Elmina and a kinsman of the author, I was thrilled when he asked me to write the foreword to this well researched and superbly written labour of love, because as a past chairman of the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board, which is the legal custodian of all historic sites in the Republic of Ghana, this was just the ticket for not only aficionados of history or children of the African diaspora but also tourists, visitors and citizens of Elmina/Edina/Amankwaakrom themselves to share in this rich history.

I trust that all who are fortunate to lay hands on this great tome will have a thoroughly enjoyable reading!

Fritz Baffour

(Chairman, Ghana Museum and Monuments Board [2009 - 2017] and former Minister of Information, Republic of Ghana)

For

*Papa Kwamena Essilfie Adjaye (22 May 1954 to 1 March 2018)
for his decades of distinguished leadership in Elmina state affairs*

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Introduction



Elmina is a coastal town in the Central Region of Ghana, located about 90 miles west of the country's capital of Accra. Although relatively small, Edina, as the town is traditionally known, has had a rich and in many ways unique history and culture going back perhaps a thousand years. It was the first point of contact with Europe in the Gold Coast in the fifteenth century; it grew to become a cosmopolitan centre of commerce; and it generated elements of Euro-African culture and civilization that have survived to the present day while the town still retains large aspects of its indigenous traditions.

When the Portuguese, the first Europeans to set foot on this part of the Guinea Coast in the 1470s, went into agreement with the King of Elmina to build the fort that came to be known as Castelo de São Jorge (Castle of St. George), now simply called Elmina Castle on the promontory overlooking the town in 1482, Elmina was already an established political entity. From then on, Elmina flourished through trade, initially in gold and subsequently in slaves, successively with the Portuguese, followed by the Dutch and finally the British.

Consequently, Elmina today bears strong evidence of the impact of centuries of European contact, trade and colonization, perhaps more than any settlement in Africa. The town was a major entrepôt in the European trade to Western Africa largely because of the strategic location of

the castle. It played a strategic role in Portugal's attempts to maintain a monopoly of trade and establish a focal point in European rivalries for supremacy in this region of the Gold Coast for centuries. The Dutch captured the castle from the Portuguese in 1637 and from then on it became the seat of their huge commercial empire linking West Africa with the Americas and Europe, until they exchanged their possessions in the Gold Coast with the British in 1872. A year later, Elmina suffered the devastation commonly referred to in the town's annals as bombardment at the hands of the British for Elmina's leaders' refusal to accept British authority, an action that was followed by the humiliating exile of their king to Freetown, Sierra Leone. Overt colonization finally brought Elmina under British control until the Gold Coast became independent in 1957.

Fortunately for the historian, an abundance of documentary evidence exists, which, combined with oral traditions, enable us to construct a fairly detailed history of Elmina. Records in Dutch, British and Ghanaian archives—perhaps unparalleled in volume anywhere else in sub-Saharan Africa—help provide details of the origins and growth of Elmina, the nature of its kingship institution and the evolution of traditional political life. Elmina's relationships not only with other indigenous coastal states and inland Asante, but also with successive European agents from Portugal, the Netherlands and Britain, provided the stimuli and other external influences that led to the development of the first cosmopolitan community in the Gold Coast. The legacy that these developments have bequeathed to us portrays an amazing degree of social, political and economic continuity and resilience.

Even though exact demographic figures are unavailable, there is ample evidence that the town flourished with the European contact. Archaeologist Christopher DeCorse has estimated that the population increased steadily from a few hundred at the time of the Portuguese arrival to some 18,000-20,000 by the mid-nineteenth century (DeCorse

9). This population growth that was occasioned by the European entry marked a significant pivoting in Elmina's trade orientation away from the Gold Coast hinterland and the trans-Saharan trade beyond to a global maritime, trans-Atlantic commerce. In fact, Christopher Columbus sailed to Elmina with a trading mission between 1482 and 1484, and the navigational knowledge, technical skills and personal assistance that he gained on this voyage were to become crucial in his subsequent voyages to the Americas. Indeed, Elmina Castle was built ten years before Columbus's first voyage to the Western Hemisphere. Elmina thence became a new frontier of opportunity not just for European visitors but for local residents as well. And the penetration of the European economic order into Elmina had far-reaching cross-cultural transformations in the everyday lifeways, economic systems, political organization, material culture, foodways and worldview of the people. The leaders of Elmina strengthened existing socio-political institutions so as to benefit from, and control, trade exchanges, a process that was intensified during the era of the European slave trade. And when the inhuman traffic was finally abolished in the early nineteenth century and supplanted by "legitimate trade" in ordinary commodities and staples, the importation of mass-produced European items in turn fuelled socio-economic changes. Finally, in the late nineteenth century Christian missionary activities further accelerated the infusion of European influences.

Yet, even though there is no doubt that the contacts with Europe engendered significant transformations and innovations, from subsistence agriculture and diet to architecture, urbanization, socio-political organization and belief systems, the overall indications point to cultural continuity rather than supplantation as Edinafo (people of Elmina) were active agents in these processes of change.

What impact has nearly 500 years of European contact had on Elmina, its social structure and ethnic composition,

political institutions, and economic life? What has been the enduring legacy of this contact? What degrees of continuity and discontinuity has the European contact brought upon indigenous life in Elmina? How did Elmina's culture and traditions survive in the face of this amazing onslaught of Europeanization? And have Edinafo derived any tangible and lasting benefits from these exchanges? It is these and other related questions that underlie and drive this study.

Elmina's historical trajectory portrays a remarkable degree of growth, expansion and modernization from the fifteenth century on. The little town that the Portuguese encountered in the 1470s had blossomed into a major urban centre by the nineteenth century largely through Dutch influences. Signs of wealth, affluence and sophistication could be found everywhere—in personal wealth and adornment, diets and lifestyles, and homes and other physical structures. Elmina was dubbed "*Aborekyir Kaakra*", that is, "Little Europe". The town had indeed reached its apogee of development and had entered its golden age. Yet, its cultural institutions and traditions, even as the residents imbibed European influences, remained truly indigenous in character, essence and organization. This remarkable co-existence of change and continuity is a core aspect of this study.

The goal of this book is to furnish both foreign visitors to Elmina and citizens with a succinct, readable account that is an encapsulation of the salient aspects of Elmina's historical and cultural evolution and development. As such, it is purposively designed to be brief. More comprehensive accounts of various aspects of Elmina's past are available elsewhere for readers seeking more detailed information. Notwithstanding the brevity of this narration, every effort has been made to maintain its historical accuracy.

Elmina and Europeans Through the Ages



This chapter recounts Elmina's story from the very beginning—the founding of Elmina. It then provides an overview of the unfolding of Elmina's history which is largely entangled with its relationship with Europe, beginning with the arrival of the Portuguese in the 1470s. It is a story of opportunity, growth, and expansion, but one that ends in disappointment and faded glory in the post-Dutch period. Through it all, however, despite tremendous transformations engendered by the European contact, Elmina has shown considerable continuity and resilience in its political institutions, social organization, economic systems and worldview.

Any visitor to Elmina finds strong evidence even today of the impact of centuries of European contact, trade and colonization. As noted above, the town was a major entrepôt in the European trade to Western Africa because it was the prime site of exportation, first of gold, and subsequently, of enslaved Africans. The Portuguese Castelo de São Jorge da Mina, built in 1482 to the east of the peninsula where Elmina was first settled, was the first European fortification and major trade post in sub-Saharan Africa.

The castle played a strategic role and became a focal point in Portugal's attempts to establish a monopoly of trade against European rivalry for supremacy in the lucrative trade of this region of the Gold Coast. The Dutch captured it

from the Portuguese in 1637 and made it the headquarters of their mercantile interests in West Africa until the 1872 Anglo-Dutch exchange of forts and castles. A year later, Elmina's opposition to the transfer and their unwillingness to come under British authority led to the bombardment and virtual destruction of the town, as has been observed above. From the late 19th century Elmina, along with much of the Gold Coast, gradually came under British colonization until the country regained its independence in 1957.

The Founding of Elmina

Oral accounts narrate that Elmina's founding ancestor, Kwaa Amankwaa, a hunter who was searching for drinking water, discovered a stream and settled there, exclaiming "M'enya" ("I have found or got it"), an expression which subsequently corrupted to "Benya," the name that has since been applied to the lagoon that is the site of the original settlement and has since remained the central element in the history of Elmina. The settlement was otherwise known as "Anomansa," that is, inexhaustible water supply. The local name of the town, however, is Edina.

Edina stool histories of origin credit not only the founding of the town to Kwaa Amankwaa but also the genesis of the royal lineage. This is the view that is universally held in Edina traditional accounts. However, other variants of the founding of Elmina are extant, though not powerful, which attribute the beginnings of Elmina to the state of Eguafu or to Guan origins. However, Elmina oral traditions emphatically dismiss any idea that they are Fantes or claim that they were originally Guans from the state of Eguafu. Instead, where migratory theories are legion, the dominant version is that which attributes the founders of Elmina to migrants from Takyiman, Brong-Ahafo.

When it comes to dating, however, traditional accounts, as typical elsewhere in Africa, are vague, assigning the founding of Elmina to any time frame from antiquity to the thirteenth

century. What is certain is that by the time of the arrival of the Portuguese in Elmina in the 1470s, there was already in existence an established coastal community with functioning institutions, including kingship. This confirms that the origins of the Elmina state were products of indigenous creation rather than external influence even though there is no doubt that the contact with Europe was to engender significant transformations—innovations in subsistence agriculture, diet, architecture, urbanization, socio-political organization, etc.—in Elmina society.

Elmina during the Portuguese Era (1482-1637)

On 19 January 1482, a fleet of twelve ships equipped with stores of supplies, building materials and hundreds of workers, all under the command of Dom Diogo D’Azambuja anchored off the shores of Elmina. The narrow rocky peninsula surrounded by the Benya Lagoon and the sea seemed a suitable site for anchoring vessels and hence a good location for the construction of a permanent fortification. D’Azambuja’s expedition was clearly massive. It included 10 caravels, 500 soldiers and servants, 100 masons, and teams of carpenters and craftsmen, along with tons of building materials.

According to documentary evidence, the Portuguese met with the Elmina chief and requested permission to build a castle. The chief at the time was named in the Portuguese records as “Caramansa”, that is, Kwamena Ansa, an identification that was subsequently substantiated by not only nearly contemporaneous authors such as João de Barros and James Clarke but also by numerous writers of a later generation including A. B. Ellis, Carl Reindorf, John Mensah Sarbah, and W. W. Claridge.

After some initial reluctance, Kwamena Ansa eventually yielded to the Portuguese request. Construction immediately began and the area on the promontory covered by the Kɔkɔbo rock was transferred to the King of Portugal by a special

document. This move was significant because it marked the first formal transfer of land from a West African ruler to a European power. In 1486 Elmina was elevated to the status of a city by King João of Portugal who subsequently granted it autonomy as the Negro Government of Elmina.

It was trade that brought Diego D’Azambuja and his party to Elmina. Indeed, prior to their arrival, Portuguese explorers had already been acquainted with the coastal area of Elmina as a gold-producing region that stretched westward to Komenda, Abrobi and Kafodzidzi. Juan de Santaran, Pedro d’Escobara and other Portuguese adventurers had led expeditions to Elmina to secure gold during the reign of Alfonso V in the 1460s and 1470s. However, stabilization of the Portuguese trade in gold would depend on a permanent settlement, which was the motivation for d’Azambuja’s mission.

With the garrison stationed at Elmina, buttressed by legal sanctions and royal decrees, Portugal attempted to enforce a monopoly of trade in Elmina and its surroundings. The Portuguese crown granted royal licenses to merchants in return for fees. Yet mariners and adventurers from rival European nations regularly engaged in interloping activities, illicit trade and piracy.

For a while, the Portuguese trade in gold flourished. It is estimated that 8,000 ounces of gold were shipped to Lisbon from 1487 to 1489, 22,500 ounces from 1494 to 1496, and another 26,000 ounces by the start of the sixteenth century. Later, with the growth of plantation agriculture in the Americas, the Portuguese became the first major exporter of slaves from Elmina and the Guinea coast. Initially, however, they imported slaves from Benin to work as porters and tillers of land.

Elmina during the Dutch Era (1637-1782)

In 1637, the Dutch successfully attacked the Portuguese St. George’s Castle, with the support of Asebu and Eguafu

contingents. Elmina thereafter replaced Moree as the headquarters of the Dutch operations on the Guinea coast.

There were operational differences that made Dutch trade far more successful than that of their Portuguese predecessors. Whereas Portuguese trade had been based on ineffective old-fashioned royal *regimentos* (decrees), Dutch commerce was propped by mercantilism. Chartered companies like the first and second West India Companies became the backbone of their commercial empire.

European officials during the period of the Portuguese and the Dutch exercised some limited authority in Elmina affairs. They were sometimes involved in settling disputes, they levied fish tolls, and they routinely recognized newly elected kings. Such powers, however, were exercised mutually with the omanhen (king/paramount chief). Politically and judicially, the Dutch and Elmina had their own jurisdictions even as they often cooperated in settling cases and disputes.

However, it was the Dutch, more than any other European nation, that made the most profound impact on Elmina in their nearly five hundred years' of active relationship with European powers. Elmina experienced significant changes in its social system, political structure, and lifestyle. Its kingship system as well as the paramilitary asafo organization were crystallized during this period. Much of the Dutch legacy that has endured to the present day—proper names, architecture, descendants of inter-marriages—date to this period. These elements are described in further detail in the chapters that follow.

Exchange of Forts

Various fortifications belonging to different European nationalities scattered and interspersed along the coast, made effective control and administration difficult. It was therefore proposed, by mutual agreement, that forts be exchanged between the Dutch and the British whereby all possessions under British jurisdiction west of the Sweet River

(the eastern border of Elmina) be exchanged for Dutch forts east of the same river. The proposed transfer would mark a major turning point in the history of Elmina. Already by the second half of the nineteenth century, declining Dutch influence was real and competition was taking a toll on Dutch trade. Unbeknown to the coastal peoples and in complete disregard of their interests, the convention for the Anglo-Dutch exchange was ratified by both countries in July 1867 and was to become effective the following year.

The proposal was vehemently opposed by nearly all the Gold Coast states affected. The Fante repudiated it, asserting that they were not consulted and that the British had no right to transfer them to another European power without their consent. To further their protestations, an assembly of chiefs of the Fante states convened at Mankesim and took an oath to attack the Dutch territories.

When news of the exchange broke out, Elmina showed its discontent by quickly sending a deputation headed by a prominent citizen D. M. Graves to Holland in early 1872 to protest. Even though the emissaries were received by the Minister for Colonies, they were diplomatically told that the negotiations for the exchange had advanced beyond reversal. When the Union Jack was finally hoisted at Elmina on 6 April 1872, general discontent and indignation with the Dutch erupted.

Early in 1873, as arrangements to effect the transfer were proceeding, representatives of all the Dutch towns affected met in Elmina with Acting Governor Yan Fergusson of Holland and Governor Pope Hennessey of Britain. Far from resolving controversies, matters quickly came to a head; when the European representatives demanded immediate acquiescence from Nana Kobina Gyan, the Elmina chief requested time to consult with his Council, as custom demanded of such grave matters and the meeting broke off in disorder. Then followed spontaneous revolts in all the towns in the Dutch sphere of influence—Shama, Sekondi,

Axim, and Dixcove. The major objection to the take-over was that the people were apprehensive that the liberties that they had enjoyed under the Portuguese administration and were respected by the Dutch might be curtailed under the British. As punishment for the people of Elmina's refusal to transfer their allegiance, the British arrested and detained Nana Kobina Gyan, along with two of his aides. Elmina regiments, supported by Asante forces, clashed in open hostilities with the British who received reinforcements from a West Indian battalion. The British proceeded to bombard and raze Elmina to the ground and deported Nana Kobina Gyan to Freetown, Sierra Leone. The "Parade Ground" in front of the castle, which is the original site of Elmina prior to the bombardment, took a heavy toll. In the mean time, British forces under Sir Garnet Wolseley were on the march to invade Asante, an ally of Elmina. After a quarter of a century in exile, Nana Kobina Gyan was repatriated in 1898 and was immediately reinstalled king. He remained on the throne for three more years before dying in 1901.

Elmina during the British Era (1872-1957)

Following the British abolition of the slave trade in 1807, and with the new economic orientation towards legitimate commerce gaining ground, Elmina saw a boom in palm oil production. The industry generated considerable wealth among some local merchants and their affluence could be seen in the elaborate houses they built. When the world market demand for palm oil dipped after 1860, their fortunes in turn foundered, and many of them left Elmina to set up businesses in other places like Cape Coast, Accra, Axim and Takoradi.

From 1880 on, Elmina, now incorporated into the British-administered Gold Coast Colony, saw its economic fortunes rise again temporarily. A number of the prosperous merchants who had left the town for greener pastures elsewhere returned and built large homes on their old family lands which had

been abandoned. Other less prosperous merchants followed this lead and returned to settle in the part of Elmina called Esuakyir (the section of Elmina that is “behind the water/lagoon”). They took to fishing and the town's prosperity surged, but for only a short while. Elmina's prosperity indeed seemed to have disappeared permanently.

Yet, hopes of a return to economic glory once more returned in the 1920s with the boom in the cocoa industry in the Gold Coast. Again, the economic rise was temporary. Nonetheless, the growth in prosperity that Elmina experienced at the time could be seen in affluent houses that were built in the 1920s. Even so, Elmina's economic prosperity had left her permanently. Plans to develop the town into an economic hub that included the upgrading of the fishing harbour into an international port or the construction of a railway line to link Elmina with the booming timber and harbour businesses of the Western Region never saw the light of day.

From the mid-nineteenth century, the coastal regions were increasingly incorporated into the British administration. The Governor was assisted by a Legislative Council and an Executive Council that advised him. However both of these bodies were made up of European officials. Thus, educated citizens of Elmina and the Gold Coast in general were excluded from these bodies, until changes were gradually made following protests that began with the Aborigines Rights' Protection Society in 1897. After 1900 a small number of chiefs and other Africans were added to the Legislative Council.

Even as the colonial government became more and more centralized, local services were delegated to chiefs within local administration. In Elmina as elsewhere in the Gold Coast, town councils of chiefs and elders were largely responsible for the immediate needs of their localities, including traditional law and order and general welfare. Thus, chiefs figured prominently in the system of indirect rule under which the British administered their colonies. Even so, the chiefs took

instructions from their European supervisors from whom they also received allowances. Thus, chiefly authority came to be curtailed. With the centralization of the colonial system, judicial cases were appealed to in Cape Coast and Accra.

The 1927 Native Administration Ordinance incorporated traditional states into paramountcies, but it also delineated the jurisdiction of chiefs and the responsibilities of provincial and local councils which now required their authority to remove chiefs and interpret customary law. Above the Native Authorities were District Commissioners who headed the various paramountcies. The local colonial administration became increasingly unpopular as African participation in the political process was marginal. After World War II, mass agitation for autonomy from Britain grew in intensity, leading to the independence of Ghana in 1957.

It is these close relationships with the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British that considerably defined Elmina's growth and expansion, beginning with the construction of the São Jorge Castle in 1482, the point where the next chapter takes off.

Elmina Castle: From Slavery to Tourism



Construction of Castelo São Jorge da Mina, popularly known as Elmina Castle, was begun by the Portuguese in 1482 and completed in 1486. The first European post in sub-Saharan Africa, it was originally intended to protect Portugal's trade in gold in the region and offer a safe haven as well as a re-provisioning station for ships passing from Europe to South Africa and Asia. Jean Barbot who visited it in 1682 vividly described it in his *Description of the Coast of North and South Guinea* (1732) as having no equal on the Guinea coast. His admiration was echoed two and-a-quarter centuries later by writer Richard Wright (*Black Power* 1954) who described it as by far the most impressive castle or fort on the Atlantic shore of the Gold Coast.

The Portuguese controlled the castle until 1637 when it was captured by the Dutch. Ownership was in turn transferred in 1872 to the British who held it until they turned it over to Ghana at the time of independence in 1957. By the seventeenth century the castle had become a prime depot for the detention of enslaved Africans prior to their shipment to Brazil and the Caribbean for plantation labour.

Built in the style of a grand medieval fortification, the front of the castle was secured by a moat. The ground floor contained the main courtyard and the male and female dungeons. Up to 1,000 captives could be crammed in these dark, airless, sweltering-hot cells even though they were

designed to hold only one-fifth of that number. Consequently, yellow fever, infections and communicable diseases were rampant. In contrast to the filthy conditions of the dungeons, the upstairs accommodations for Europeans were luxurious—spacious officers' quarters, governors' chambers with beautiful parquet floors and a spectacular view of the Atlantic Ocean, and a church. The room in which Asantehene (Asante King) Prempe I was detained in 1896-97 for his resistance to British colonization prior to his long exile in the Seychelles still bears his name. A staircase led directly from the governor's apartment to the female dungeon below, making it easy for him to pick unfortunate women to be raped.

Captive Africans could be held in these unsanitary and horrific conditions awaiting shipment for up to three months before they would be manacled and dragged through a narrow slot in the castle wall infamously known as the "Door of No Return" to embark on the hazardous trans-Atlantic journey across the Middle Passage. Meanwhile those who rebelled or resisted their imprisonment would be locked up in small, windowless condemned cells, beaten and often left to die of starvation.

Elmina Castle served as a central depot where slaves from the hinterland regions and other parts of the country were brought for sale to Europeans. By the seventeenth century, the Dutch were exporting some 30,000 slaves each year through Elmina. An inscription paying respects to the everlasting memory of the millions who were victimized by the brutalities of European slavery reads: "May humanity never again perpetuate such injustice against humanity".

The castle has served a variety of functions over the years: first, a trading post, slave dungeon and military fortification; then, under the British, a colonial administrative center, a prison, a Government Technical School, and a Post and Telegraph office; and finally after independence, a police training academy and the site of Edinaman Day Secondary School, before becoming a tourist attraction. In 1972, it

was preserved as a national monument and designated a World Heritage Monument under UNESCO. It is a popular pilgrimage destination for many African Americans seeking to reconnect with their ancestry and long lost heritage. A museum was created inside the castle in 1996 to preserve the cultural heritage of Elmina and provide educational information about the history of the castle. It houses photos of the castle and Elmina as well as trade and slavery paraphernalia such as gold-weights, beads, ceramics, textiles and shackles. Even though slavery is now a thing of the past, the interior of the castle is a silent reminder of a horrific past.

Although Elmina became a major export center for the slave trade, the historical record indicates that the bulk of the captive Africans that the Portuguese exported came from distant places including other coastal areas, northern Gold Coast, Benin and Liberia, rather than from the vicinity of Elmina itself. In the early decades, the Portuguese imported slaves into Elmina to be used as artisans, garrison workers, porters of trade goods to the interior, agricultural workers and personal militia. In addition to slave labour, there were some instances of panyarring (see Chapter 5), a situation in which a person who was indebted was sold into slavery until the debt was paid off, although such a practice was not widespread. Between 1500 and 1555 it is estimated that the Portuguese imported some 10,000 to 12,000 slaves mainly from the Niger Delta and the Bight of Benin. By the sixteenth century, the European slave trade to the Americas was in full swing.

The export of slaves from Elmina rose sharply during the Dutch period. In addition to serving their own American plantations, the Dutch also had a controlling interest in the supply of slaves to the Spanish colonies. By the eighteenth century, Suriname and Guyana had become prime markets for Dutch exports. Even in the absence of accurate statistics, it is estimated that Dutch exports amounted to some 30,000 per year or about 550,000 to 600,000 for their entire period prior to 1872. Enslaved Africans departed from Elmina for

several plantation destinations in the Americas, notably in Curaçao and Jamaica, where their descendants appeared in the forefront of rebellions and other resistance activities (see “Maroons” below).

The European slave trade, commonly referred to as the trans-Atlantic slave trade, spanned the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries, and ended up being the largest involuntary transplantation of humans in history or the greatest holocaust. Though accurate statistics are unavailable, it is estimated that by the time the slave trade had been abolished in the mid-nineteenth century, some 10-12 million Africans had been landed alive in the Americas, not counting another equal number who may have lost their lives in the operations associated with the capture of hapless Africans, their detention in dungeons under horrible conditions, and their ultimate transportation along the hazardous Middle Passage to the Americas.

It should be noted, however, that slavery in Africa, as an institution, bore marked differences from that of the Americas. In Elmina and elsewhere in Africa, slaves were assimilated into the *ebusua* (matrilineage), linked by marriage ties and kin relations, and over generations, their servile origins were largely lost. They did not live separately from the rest of society as happened on the American plantations. In fact, under the Dutch, *trainsslaven* (company slaves) enjoyed some degree of freedom and lived within the town. Slave-holding in Elmina, however, was not restricted to Europeans as rich local merchants were served by a slave or two. (The subject of indigenous slavery is discussed further in Chapter 5 below.)

The slave trade ushered Africa into a global economic order, the first globalization, but in an inequitable way that situated Africa and the “New World” at the periphery of this system whereas Europe was located at the centre. For, whereas Africa was depopulated and drained of its human capacity for three and one-half centuries, sugar and other tropical commodities that slave labour produced on the

American plantations and were exported to Europe under its mercantilist system laid the foundations for European industrialization, capitalist formation and the growth of port cities. In contrast, Africa received in return from Europe guns and gin, that is, instruments of destruction and violence. Thus, it has been asserted that European slavery and its successor, colonization, laid the basis of African underdevelopment.

By the late eighteenth century, however, with the rise of free trade principles, slave labour was becoming counterproductive and the sustained campaigns of the anti-slavery movement eventually led to the 1807 British abolition act that banned the importation of African slaves into its territories. This in turn laid the groundwork for the establishment of a network of treaties that enabled the British naval squadron patrolling the coast of West Africa to intercept slave ships and set free their captives who were then settled in Sierra Leone. However, it was not until 1834 that slaves were emancipated in the British colonies. The French followed suit in 1848, the Dutch in 1863, and finally the Spanish in the 1880s in various colonies. The United States abolished slavery in 1865 after a bitter Civil War.

The Castle and Problems of Slavery Memory: Individual and Public

When the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board under the Government of Ghana decided to pursue a policy of promoting the castles of Ghana as tourist sites in the 1970s, debates and controversies erupted over the preservation of these monuments, tensions which persist to this day. At the crux of these tensions are the divergent ways in which individuals, groups and governments view slavery, the physical institutions associated with it, its memory and its legacy. Should these symbols of devastation be preserved and even renovated, or should they be allowed to rot over time? Alternatively at the personal level, how does one or how should one view these enduring remnants of

inhumanities? More poignantly, what different kinds of memory and emotions are evoked when different people visit the slave castles, be they local residents, Ghanaians from other locations, African-Americans or Europeans? And at the larger societal level, how do we seek to understand the ways in which memories of historical monuments are integrated, articulated or remain unarticulated in society, since a shroud of silence generally surrounds the subject of slavery?

A further issue of contention is whether or not the name *castle* is appropriate for these structures. As commonly used, the word *castle* refers to several types of fortifications that Europeans built on the coast of Ghana, some of which have survived in preserved forms or in remnants. The objection to the use of the word *castle* is that it connotes a comfortable luxurious accommodation, a far cry from the horrific conditions in which the enslaved Africans were held prior to their trans-Atlantic nightmares.

Tours

A tour of the castle typically begins with a general introduction by the guide in the main courtyard. This is followed by tours of the male and female dungeons, the governor's residence, the chapel, and other major parts of the edifice. Guided tours normally take up to 40 minutes and end in the "Door of No Return", a highly emotional point. Guests are invited to visit the museum either before or after the tour.

No matter one's background, visits to the castle can be an unusually personal experience because the monument is a powerful icon of memorialization that can be transformational. For many African-Americans, especially, visits to slave castles are seen as pilgrimages that are emotionally charged and liberating from a racist America. Many often take the occasion to conceptualize and visualize their connection to their African ancestry and the painful period of American slavery. Reactions can escalate to feelings of deep anguish and anger because they come face to face with the physical

representations and reminders of a painful heritage. I have seen many who have attempted to internalize their sense of pain in silence, appearing to mourn their loss in shedding tears. I have seen others seek to find a resolution by invoking the spirits of the ancestors for guidance. Feelings of pain and anger typically reach a peak at the “Door of No Return”. In contrast, for many Ghanaians, visits to the castle are more of attempts to understand the larger issue of slavery than understanding their personal heritage.

Because of the high level of interest in the controversies surrounding the subject of the castles and their place in the history of slavery, I am capturing the main debates here for the benefit of the individual visitor as well as monument preservation officials. I have provided a more detailed analysis of the controversies elsewhere (Adjaye 2014).

Preservation

Of all the issues surrounding the castles and Ghanaian tourism, the question of preservation is the most hotly contested. At the centre of the debate is the question of whether these representations of oppression should be preserved or left to degenerate into ruins. Opponents of preservation argue that renovation is like sugar-coating history or aestheticizing sites of horror.

Sacrilegizing of Sacred Sites

Some, especially African-Americans, view the castles as hallowed grounds that should not be the venue of mundane visits. Even though a castle does not represent the entire institution of slavery, it is the most visible symbol of the enslavement process, hence the source of brutality. These people view castle sites like shrines that should be approached with reverence, sacredness and solemnity. For these reasons, they objected to the opening of a restaurant in Elmina Castle on the grounds that such an action would be tantamount to defiling and desecrating sacred places. They maintained that

castle grounds are haunted spaces and must be kept as such. In symbolic memorializations of their visits, some African Americans have been known to take back with them small amounts of soil or pieces of cracked concrete from the castle.

Ownership

Another bone of contention is the question of who actually owns the castle and has the right to determine or influence policy about it. For example, the charge of the profanization of the castle was spearheaded by the resident African-American expatriate community in Ghana. This is a numerically large group numbering over 1,000, which has been steadily increasing going back to the presidency of Kwame Nkrumah who encouraged African-American repatriation in the spirit of pan-Africanism. The émigré African-American community considers the whitewashing of the castle as amounting to sanitizing a painful historical period and view with suspicion the involvement of the American government in the conservation efforts. Anger reached a boiling point when plans were announced to locate a gift shop inside one of the slave dungeons. After intense protest, the gift shop was moved to an upstairs location. Even though the intention of the Monuments Board was to provide a place where visitors could secure refreshments, objectors protested that such an action would be the equivalent to locating a restaurant inside a cemetery.

Commercialization and Commodification

The main objection was that the commercialization of artifacts and memorabilia associated with slavery is insensitive to the memory and suffering of the victims of enslavement.

Marginalization of Coastal Residents

Local residents often feel that the whole idea of tourism promotion centred on the slave castles is intended for the benefit of diasporan Africans and that indigenes have no voice

in the decision-making process. In particular, they charge that little or no benefit trickles down to them. It is hoped that the “Elmina Strategy 2015” plan (see Chapter 12) would help right this imbalance and bring some direct tourism benefit to local entrepreneurs and businesses.

Silence and Anti-Silence: The Power of Muteness

How can we explain the fact that descendants of both the slavers and the enslaved victims are silent about the institution of slavery on all sides of the continent? The extensive oral histories collected and examined by Akosua Perbi (2004) reveal that a major cause of the silence is a deep sense of shame, which is a characteristic of all traumatized societies. However, Foucault pointed out in *A History of Sexuality* (1979: 27) that the things that one declines to say are not that different from the things that one says; that actually the said and the unsaid operate in a complementary way. Hence, silent reactions after visits to slave dungeons are as powerful as openly-voiced protestations and expressions of anger. This observation speaks to the power of muteness.

Selective Memory and Glorification of the Past

All too often, when slavery’s memory is invoked, whether by citizens of Elmina or Dutch officials, there has been a tendency to selectively dwell on the more positive legacy of the European contact to the point of omission of the evils of the slave trade. In 2002, for example, The Netherlands celebrated 300 years of diplomatic relations with Ghana. The Prince of Orange who represented the Dutch government, in his official address, dwelled on the Dutch legacy in historic monuments, architectural forms, family names and loan words derived from the Dutch language while conveniently sidestepping the legacy of the slave trade in which the Dutch were a prime player. In other words, his remembrances concentrated on the glorification and idealization of the Dutch connection.

This should take no one by surprise, for in the Netherlands

itself, the issue of Dutch role in the slave trade is often overlooked or unknown. In schools, when the subject of slavery comes up, attention is quickly shifted to North America and the slave traders are vaguely described as European. “Many Dutch people want to know why the slave trade and slavery is a problem that should concern them,” Susan le Gene, head curator of the Tropen Museum in Amsterdam, which deals with the Netherlands’ colonial past, recently opined (2013).

Locally in Elmina, there is similarly a tendency to concentrate on the glorious “*Aborekyir Kaakra*” Dutch period while remaining silent about the slave trade. A case in point is the “Save Elmina Association”, which was founded in 1990, with the support of Dutch businesses in Ghana, with the goal of preserving the Dutch heritage, especially the positive aspects of its legacy. An address by the then chairman of the association, J. V. L. Phillips, reminiscing about the “romance of Elmina lurking behind the now pathetic exterior” (1995: 4), is typical of most citizens’ sentiments about the Dutch connection.

The Elmina Java Museum presents another typical case of selective memory. Built in 2000 by my cousin Dr. Thaddeus M. Ulzen, it presents a relatively positive image of the Dutch legacy. The museum’s exhibits focus on the participation of Africans who were recruited from Elmina to fight in The Netherlands’ colonial expansion war in Indonesia from 1832-37 and is especially dedicated to the memory of my great grandfather Corporal Manus Ulzen (see Chapter 9 below), who distinguished himself in the campaign. But, as I indicated elsewhere (Adjaye 2004:16), the Java Museum, like the general public sentiment about the European past, is a project in selective memory. Its mission is:

to preserve the history, largely forgotten, of these African men who served gallantly in the East Indies’ and not to recall the largely forgotten inhumanities of slavery...They show a

preference for constructions of visions that recall a glorious past and envision the coastal towns as enclaves of European modernity stemming from colonialism (2004:16).

As Hosley similarly commented, the intimacy that local elites developed with Europeans through Western education and Christianity led them to navigate European discourses about the slave trade and ultimately sequester it from constructions of their histories (2008: 28). This is why place names like Liverpool Street, Niezer's Garden and Dutch Cemetery still resonate positively in Elmina.

The Politics of Slavery: Pan-African Identity

Different constituencies view the slave castles in various ways politically. The governments of Ghana do not only recognize the tourist potential of the castles for generating hard-earned foreign exchange but also see tourism as a means to promote pan-African identity with diasporan Africans. Indeed, for many African Americans, visits to the castles derive from a commitment to a pan-African identity that symbolizes defiance of an American government that has failed to achieve complete equality for persons of African descent.

My own experiences, both at the personal level, and in my interactions with others, confirm many of these divergent and conflicting views. First, my Ulzen family home in which I grew up at Sybir in Elmina, was located right on the coast, and even though I regularly played as a kid on the shore, with the castle in the background, its awe-inspiring image was such that I rarely ventured inside it. Common knowledge told me that slaves had been kept inside the castle, but my emotions had more to do with the consternation that this monstrous structure inspired in me than the horrors encountered by the enslaved Africans who were detained there, for slavery as a subject was rarely talked about in the coastal community, let alone among the Ghanaian society at large.

Later, as an adult, my images of the castles obviously

underwent significant transformations through my specialization in African studies in Ghana and the U.S. Further, in the past several decades, I have had the opportunity of taking various groups of American educators, students and members of the general public on study tours of Ghana, in which visits to the castles have been a primary draw and have observed the reactions of participants in my groups. In many poignant ways, their emotions and reactions confirm many of the views and sentiments expressed above. I have observed unique situations in which African Americans have been overcome by emotion or filled with grief and anger after touring the castle. I have also heard conflicting views about the issue of the preservation of the castles and the whole institution of slavery in debriefing sessions that I had with them after the tours.

Literary, Artistic, Visual and Performative Memorializations

It should be pointed out, however, that visits to Elmina Castle and other slave monuments are not the only forms of memorialization about the slavery legacy. In fact, memories about the history of slavery have been captured in literary, autobiographical, dramatic and visual forms. The best known examples include Kwadwo Opoku-Agyeman's *Cape Coast Castle: A Collection of Poems*, the autobiographic work, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*, an eighteenth century Igbo ex-slave who became an anti-slave campaigner after his liberation, the film "Sankofa" produced by the Ethiopian-born filmmaker Haile Gerima, "Soul to Soul", a concert and documentary staged in Accra in 1971 that featured top Black R & B artists, the dramatic performance "Musu" (the "abomination" of [the slave trade]) created by the National Dance Company of the Ghana National Theatre, and "PANAFEST".

Founded in 1991 by a Ghanaian government anxious to overcome the silence surrounding the subject of slavery, bridge

the gap between continental and Diasporan Africans and project a more positive legacy of the slave trade, PANAFEST was begun as a biannual Pan-African arts extravaganza. Its highlights include a grand durbar of chiefs, Emancipation Day and a solemn Vigil while at the same time showcasing the best of local culture to diasporan Africans. Unfortunately, PANAFEST has not lived up to expectation since its inception over 25 years ago and seems to have lost its original steam.

It is evident that Elmina Castle, like other slave-related monuments in Ghana, evokes different emotions and sentiments in different people. It is equally evident, too, that there is a dichotomy between the way African Americans view the castle and slavery in general as opposed to Ghanaian perceptions, for whereas the legacy of slavery still lingers overtly in American society in the form of racial discrimination, the most permanent legacy that slavery has bequeathed to Ghanaians was in the form of colonialism which was superseded by nationalism. It is not that Ghanaians are unconcerned about slavery, unlike many African Americans. The point is that in the eyes of many Ghanaians, the castles are an embodiment of a larger history of which slavery is a part. Further, many would prefer to distance themselves from the stigma of slavery as something that someone else's ancestor was involved in, for after all, societal conventions forbid the disclosure of an individual's servile origins.

But no matter one's perspective, these forts and castles are here to stay. They are physical embodiments of our cultural heritage and symbols of continuity with the past as much as resilience into the future.

Fort Jago

A brief word about the other, much smaller Fort Jago, which is also situated in Elmina, is warranted before we close this chapter.

Standing atop a steep hill opposite St. George's Castle (Elmina Castle) is Fort Jago, formally known as Fort

Coenraadsburg. This was originally the site of a small Portuguese chapel dedicated to Saint James. It was from this vantage point that the Dutch barraged and bombarded St. George's Castle in 1637 and wrestled it from the Portuguese. Thereafter, to prevent rival European powers from using the same tactic against them, the Dutch constructed a permanent fort on that location primarily for the defence and protection of Elmina Castle. In the 1660s, the Elmina Castle Director General J. Valckenburg replaced the earthen fortification with a permanent fort built out of local sandstone and named it Fort Coenraadsburg, which has since become better known as Fort Jago.

Right from the beginning, Fort Jago was unlike any other European fortification in the Gold Coast. It was built for military rather than commercial purposes. It therefore had only military quarters and no commercial warehouses. The major components of the fort were two strong landward bastions and two smaller seaward bastions, all for the defence of Elmina Castle. The fort was always well-garrisoned.

In addition to its primary defence function, the Dutch used Fort Jago as a prison for European convicts and as a disciplinary facility for their disobedient officers. After the 1872 English takeover, the new owners made some modifications in the 1880s such as the addition of a second floor to the main structure of the fort, which allowed it to be used for some civilian purposes as well. In recent history, Fort Jago has been used as a prison, a hospital and a rest house.

Origins and Organization of the Slave Trade



This chapter's main concerns are the origins and organization of the slave trade, the role of European slavers in the operations associated with capture and enslavement, and the question of African collaboration. Also discussed is an issue often ignored, that of African resistance to slave trading.

It is widely accepted that forms of servitude existed throughout Africa long before the arrival of Europeans in the fifteenth century. In addition, Arabic slavery across the Sahara, the Red Sea, and the Indian Ocean existed for centuries prior to the entry of Europeans into the continent of Africa in the 15th century. Therefore did indigenous African and Arab/Muslim slavery provide a justification for the massive enslavement of Africans to the Americas that came to be initiated by Europeans?

No. In the first place, the Muslim slave export was relatively small-scale and amounted to only a few thousand a year. Estimates range from 5,000 to 10, 000 per year at most (Lovejoy 2000). Similarly, the mere existence of internal slavery in sub-Saharan Africa by itself did not justify the creation of the massive trans-Atlantic slave trade. In fact, Walter Rodney (1972) has argued that parts of the Upper Guinea region did not know slavery until Europeans introduced the trans-Atlantic slave trade. European greed and racism provided the catalysts that transformed Africa into the arena for the greatest holocaust in history.

The slave trade was initiated and sustained by European insatiable greed for profits. It was fuelled by an avariciousness that was blinded in the face of the brutalization of millions of African victims and the annihilation of hapless Amerindians in the Caribbean. That the slave trade lasted some 3.5 centuries from the 16th to the mid-19th centuries was due in large measure to its immense profitability despite its high mortality. After all, this was the age of mercantilism and the belief that the surest way for any European nation to achieve supremacy was for it to obtain overseas colonies that could be exploited for their raw materials. Thus the growth of port cities like Liverpool, Nantes, Rotterdam, and Lisbon, the development of capital in Europe, and above all the rise of the industrial revolution all depended on the cultivation of tropical produce such as sugar, tobacco and cotton by African slave labour on American plantations and their export to the enslaving European countries of England, France, the Netherlands, Spain and Portugal. Imperialism and slavery went hand-in-hand. And when the European slave trade finally came to an end in the nineteenth century, economic reasons were at the heart of abolition. The fact that slave labour had at last been found to be counterproductive, that is, less productive than hired labour, at a time when principles of *laissez-faire* (free trade) were on the ascendancy had more to do with abolition than the rise of human rights awareness among the Christian countries of Europe.

Secondly, the origins of the slave trade can be traced to Christopher Columbus and the emergence of racism. Columbus' four voyages to the Americas were preceded by political and economic developments that had a direct bearing on the course of the history of the four continents of Europe, Africa and North and South America. For several centuries prior to the fifteenth, the Christian nations of the Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal) had been engaged in a prolonged warfare to expel the Moors who had occupied, ruled and civilized their countries but who were Muslim.

This is the period of warfare known in Spanish history as Reconquista (“Reconquest”) and more popularly identified as the crusades. By the 1490s, the “Reconquest” had been completed, but it had profound repercussions. In the first place, the prolonged warfare had drained the coffers of the Spanish crown, which now turned to the new frontiers of the Western Hemisphere to replenish its resources. Secondly, the “Reconquest” had bred a generation of veterans of war who were now restless and looking for adventure elsewhere. It was from the ranks of these ex-warriors that Columbus drew his followers. Finally, the protracted warfare against the Moors whom the Christian soldiers of Spain and Portugal considered infidel and inferior had engendered a deep-seated religious zeal and racially-based feelings of superiority that they were to carry to the Americas.

Thus, Spanish monarchs, Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon, were motivated to support Columbus in the hope of finding gold to refill their depleted treasury while a host of fortune-seeking adventurers accompanied Columbus on his four voyages beginning in 1492, the first of which landed in Hispaniola (modern Haiti and the Dominican Republic). That very little gold was found on the island of Hispaniola is a matter of historical record. However, what Columbus and his cohorts found in the region were rich agricultural lands suitable for the cultivation of tropical produce such as sugar.

The tasks of clearing forests, building towns and cultivating sugarcane were labour intensive. Yet the arrogant Spaniards, most of whom ironically came from humble beginnings, refused to work the land for themselves. Instead, they enslaved the indigenous Amerindians to perform the menial work. Thus began the process of the virtual extermination of the darker-skinned Arawak, Carib and Ciboney populations through overwork and epidemic diseases brought by the invading Spaniards. And when the Amerindians appeared wiped out, the Spaniards turned to other dark-skinned populations—this time from Africa—to provide their labour force. Already,

by the 1480s, the Portuguese were transporting Africans for use as slaves on the sugar plantations in the Cape Verde and Madeira islands. Thus, before the enslavement of Africans, Amerindians had been the victims of European brutality. However, in both cases, race was a factor of enslavement.

Somehow, the facts of European greed and racism being the fundamental cause of the slave trade have often been overshadowed by spurious explanations such as Africans being the more robust race or being more familiar with agricultural tasks. Other myths have been perpetuated by Eurocentric ideology. Among the most pervasive is that the Western Hemisphere is a new world discovered by Columbus and his progeny. There is no doubt that the Western Hemisphere is an old world steeped in millennia of civilization including those of the Aztecs and Incas. The myth of discovery was perpetrated by the West in order to justify Columbus' atrocities. Columbus did not discover any lands. The historical record states incontestably that on the 12th of October 1492, a group of Lucayo Arawaks *discovered* a lost Columbus on their shores and took him into their midst. Yet, Western ideology has turned history upside down and created a myth that it was rather Columbus who discovered the Amerindians who had been living in the region for centuries. Moreover, as has indisputably been established by van Sertima (1976) and other scholars, Columbus was not even the first to sail to the Western Hemisphere; streams of sailors including Malians, Phoenicians, Egyptians, Chinese, Celts, Scandinavians and a host of others preceded Columbus. Surely, if, according to Western theory, Columbus was the first, then the history of the region can be said to have started with his entry in the fifteenth century.

What's in a Name?: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade

Western scholars began the tradition of calling this traffic in human beings that was initiated by Columbus the *trans-Atlantic slave trade*, a view that has been discredited by some

Africanist historians. It has been pointed out above that prior to the arrival of Europeans in Africa in the fifteenth century, a form of slave trade existed which involved the transportation of enslaved Africans to the Arabian peninsula, India and other parts of Asia. Eurocentric scholars were quick to call this traffic Arab slave trade or Muslim slave trade, based on the fact that the principal operators were Arab Muslims. These scholars did not apply geographic parameters such as trans-Red Sea or trans-Indian Ocean slave trade. If one were to apply the same criteria based on the principal agents, one would describe the slave trade involving Africans to the Americas as the European or Christian slave trade. However, by appropriating geographic descriptors it is easy to obscure Western culpability for the enslavement of millions of Africans, although admittedly some African middle-men were involved in both slave trades. Even more incongruous is the seemingly innocuous description of *triangular trade*.

Others object to the use of the word “slave” and prefer “enslaved Africans”. To refer to the Africans who were enslaved only as “slaves” strips them of their identity. They were, for instance, Akan, Yoruba, Igbo or persons belonging to other ethnicities; they were also “somebody”, that is, farmers, merchants, priests, soldiers, goldsmiths and musicians, etc.

Patterns of Enslavement

The principal area of the exportation of enslaved Africans by Europeans to the Western Hemisphere was the 3,000-mile long coastal region from Senegal to Angola, which was subdivided into seven zones as shown below.

The following chart, which is constructed from estimates provided by Lovejoy (2000), shows the export figures for the various zones.

Exportation of enslaved Africans to the Americas

	Zones	Estimates
1.	Senegambia (Senegal and The Gambia)	4.8%
2.	Upper Guinea (Guinea-Bissau, Guinea and Sierra Leone)	4.1%

	Zones	Estimates
3.	Windward Coast (Liberia and the Ivory Coast)	1.8%
4.	The Gold Coast	10.4%
5.	Bight of Benin (Togo, Benin and Nigeria west of the Niger Delta)	20.2%
6.	Bight of Biafra (Nigeria east of the Niger Delta, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon)	14.6%
7.	West Central Africa (Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo and Angola)	39.4%
	Total	100%

The processes of slave acquisition and export to the Americas were extremely complex. For example, by 1494, the Portuguese king had entered into agreements with the rulers of several West African states that would allow trade between their respective peoples, enabling the Portuguese to “tap into” the “well-developed” commercial economy that existed in Africa.

Historians have widely debated the exact nature of the relationship that existed between these African kingdoms and the European traders. The Guyanese historian Walter Rodney (1972) has argued that it was an unequal relationship, with Africans being forced into a colonial trade with the more economically developed Europeans, exchanging raw materials and human resources (i.e., slaves) for manufactured goods. He argued that it was this economic trade arrangement dating back centuries that led to Africa being underdeveloped even in his own time. These ideas were supported by other historians, including Ralph Austen (1987).

The period of the slave trade is sometimes divided into two sub-eras, known as the First and Second Atlantic Systems. The First Atlantic System involved primarily the trade of enslaved Africans to the South American colonies of the Portuguese and Spanish empires. It began around 1502 and lasted until 1620 when Portugal was temporarily united with Spain, and was characterized by a near-monopoly of the Spaniards who either obtained captive Africans directly or indirectly

through licenses known as *asientos* that were granted mainly to merchants from other countries.

The Second Atlantic System corresponded to the post-1620 period, when, with the breakup of the Spanish monopoly, a fierce competition ensued among the Dutch, English, French, Portuguese and Spaniards. The principal destinations for enslaved Africans at this time were the plantations of the Caribbean colonies and Brazil.

As has been observed above, the slave trade is sometimes geographically described as the triangular trade, again, to sidestep questions of blame. In this case, the axes of the triangle consisted of first, European slavers leaving their home port cities with goods such as guns, gin and other factory-made items to Africa to be exchanged for captives. The second leg of the triangle was the infamous crossing of the Atlantic known as the Middle Passage. This was a horrific voyage, which, in those days took at least 2.5 months during which the captive Africans were kept in tightly-packed and over-crowded decks with low ceilings that did not permit them to sit upright. Because crews feared insurrection, the Africans were chained. The autobiographical account of the Nigerian ex-slave Olaudah Equiano, published in 1789, graphically captures the sufferings endured by African captives on the Middle Passage. The third and final axis of the triangle was formed by the shipment of slave plantation-produced goods such as sugar, cotton, tobacco, molasses and rum back to Europe.

The processes of slave acquisition were complex and controversial, and included direct European action, African middlemen, and African-European collaboration, in some cases. European agents, sometimes called factors, were in some cases directly involved. They established residences on the coast and plied their goods for human cargo. Elsewhere, there were examples of the collaboration of African rulers with European purveyors. There were also instances where Euro-African intermarriages such as *cassare* were employed

as a means of creating bonds and alliances that could be used to strengthen trade networks with Europeans. (*Cassare* is derived from the Portuguese word “*casar*”, meaning “to marry”.)

Where African elites were involved, the captives were typically war victims from neighbouring or enemy ethnic groups. According to Thornton (1995: 310), Europeans usually bought enslaved people who were captured in endemic warfare between African states. Sometimes, perpetrators of certain crimes could face enslavement. However, it has been contended that the term slave trade is a misnomer as slavery was often initiated by and sustained through violent acts such as kidnapping, raiding and banditry. Indeed, throughout history, violent methods have accounted for more enslavement than any other method of acquisition such as sale.

Salaga-Assin Manso Slave Route

A number of internal routes existed along which captive Africans were transported from the interior to the coast for sale and shipment to the Americas. In the Gold Coast, one of the most notorious of these routes was the Salaga-Assin Manso-Cape Coast/Elmina track, with branches going to Shama and Axim.

Salaga was the largest slave market in northern Gold Coast. It was a regional market centre that connected the Asante northern periphery to the Western Sudan. Kola reached the Salaga market from Atebubu, Kintampo and the Akyem areas by way of the Kwawu and Afram plains. The northern slave routes which converged on Salaga originated from different points and directions; from Hausaland came slaves, by way of Borgu or Gurma, usually passing through Yendi; from Mossi country to the north (and from Timbuktu and Jenne), through Gambaga came livestock, cotton and shea butter in addition to slaves; from the north-west, ‘Grunshi’ country, where the mounted Zaberima adventurers Gasari and Babatu

and their successors operated, slaves were imported; as well as from the west, from Bonduku. However, most of the slaves that passed through Salaga were described as “Grunshi”, a blanket term that covered an amalgam of people from Dagomba, Mamprussi and Mossi living on both sides of the Ghana-Burkina Faso border.

Salaga was a cosmopolitan merchants’ town where Hausa was widely spoken as a *lingua franca*. As was common in such towns, resident merchants typically accommodated travelling or visiting traders, whether ethnically related or not, acting as landlords of sorts and brokers. Estimates of the population of Salaga in the 19th century ranged from 20,000 to 50,000, including seasonal visitors.

The market was divided into two sections: the produce section which traded yams, rice, maize and textiles; and the “human ware” or slaves section. The market activities were vigorous. The principal items traded were slaves for kola and cowries. By the 1880s, gunpowder and alcohol had become important commodities as well. According to some estimates, some 15,000 to 20,000 slaves were traded there each year and even when the slave trade was outlawed in the 19th century slave trading activities continued (Johnson 1986: 341).

From his informants, social anthropologist R. S. Rattray was able to provide a detailed account of the Salaga market. There were stands in the market, Rattray reported, for slaves, cattle, sheep and merchandise. The slaves were fastened to a long rope which was attached to another rope round the waist of each, and there were iron shackles on their legs. If you wished to buy a slave you first inspected him or her and bargained for the price. The trader first had to exchange his kola for cowries with which he paid for the slave. Next he made a non-refundable payment known as *tramma* (earnest money), which allowed him to take the slave home overnight in order to examine him. You called in a friend who could understand the slave’s language and, if a female slave, a woman to examine her. The next day, if you decided you did

not want to conclude the purchase, you returned the slave and forfeited the *tramma*. The typical price in the 19th century was 41 *akpan* (loads), equivalent to about 9,000 nuts for a male slave; that for a female was 14,000 nuts, which corresponded to 30,000-34,000 cowries for a male, and 60,000-80,000 for a female, respectively (Rattray, 1929: 36).

A visitor to Salaga today would see several relics of its slave trading past that have now been preserved by the government of Ghana in recent decades as part of its tourism promotion activities. These include the Old Slave Market, located in the centre of town where the main trading activities took place. The old baobab tree that marked that location died but has been replaced by another one. In the same vicinity of the baobab tree, one also finds *Rafi Angulu* (literally, stream of vultures), a stream into which corpses of slaves who died there, instead of being buried, were thrown for vultures to devour. Not far, one can see remnants of what used to be warehouses, holding areas for enslaved victims awaiting sale or transportation to the coast. Other vestiges of slavery include the *Wankanbayi* (the place of bath for slaves) and drinking wells. At the Kpembe Wura (Kpembe King's) palace, slavery accouterments such as iron shackles and log pegs have been preserved.

From Salaga, the slave destinations varied. Prior to the 1880s, the south-western Atebubu and Kintampo routes were quite significant. These routes led all the way, through several terminals, to the final coast destinations. The last major stop on the central route was Assin-Manso, where the slaves were given a final bath. After the 1880s, because of the British abolition, the south-eastern routes to Togo gained in importance.

Besides the export market, slaves could be retained locally for farm work, fetching water and firewood, performing domestic labour in the landlords' households, and assisting in their masters' business ventures.

African Resistance

Not all Africans were complicit in, or indifferent to, the slave trade. There were, indeed, numerous cases in which some African kings and other leaders objected to or resisted the slave trade. The story of Salaga as a major regional slave market has been told above. What is often not recognized is that there were also efforts to protect certain communities from slave raids. Towns such as Gwollu, 70 km north of Wa, Nalerigu in the Upper East Region and Gambaga all built defensive walls of protection against slave raids. In southern Nigeria, Jaja of Opobo was known to have refused to sell any of his captives or criminals into slavery and even declined to do business with the slavers entirely.

Adam Hochschild's *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (1998) not only exposes the horrors and brutalities of the Belgians in the Congo but also reveals many aspects of slavery including African resistance to the institution. For example, in letters written to King João of Portugal, the Manikongo (King of Congo) Nzinga Mbemba Alfonso requested that the Portuguese monarch stop sending merchandise that would fuel the slave trade and instead only send missionaries, complaining that Portuguese slave traders were kidnapping his subjects and depopulating his kingdom.

King Agaja Trudo of Dahomey not only opposed the slave trade, but went as far as to attack the European forts that were key to the enslavement process. Another well-known case involved Queen Njingha Mbandi of Ndongo (in modern Angola) who, in 1630, attempted to drive the Portuguese out of her realm, but was finally forced to compromise with them.

Other African leaders such as Donna Beatriz Kimpa Vita in Kongo and Abd al-Qadir in what is now northern Senegal also urged resistance against the forced export of Africans.

Resistance to slavery and enslavement was an everyday affair right from the point of capture through detention in the slave dungeons to the forced transportation across the

Atlantic. It is now estimated that ship mutinies occurred on at least 20 percent of all slave ships crossing the Atlantic.

Perhaps the most celebrated of all ship mutinies was the successful insurrection led by Sengbe Pieh (Joseph Cinque) in 1839, which was dramatically portrayed by Director Steven Spielberg in his 1997 film *Amistad*. Sengbe, a Mende from Sierra Leone, was captured as a slave along with other men, women and children numbering 53. It was while the group was being transported in the schooner *La Amistad* from the Cuban capital of Havana to the port of Puerto Principe that Sengbe overpowered his Spanish captors and freed himself and the other fellow slaves.

Sengbe then ordered the Spanish captain to sail in the direction of the rising sun, that is, eastward toward his homeland of Africa. However a strong gale drove the *Amistad* adrift and eventually led to their capture by the U.S. Navy. Then ensued a protracted legal fight which eventually freed Sengbe and his compatriots. When a Supreme Court dominated by Southern sympathizers of slavery gave its landmark verdict in 1841 that it is the ultimate right of all people in extreme cases to resist oppression, it represented the first time that U.S. courts recognized that Africans were human rather than property. The court drama ultimately concluded with the return home of Sengbe and his fellow Sierra Leoneans in 1843, their number having been reduced by attrition to 35 (Adjaye 1999).

The most famed of all slave rebellions, however, was the one that was led by Toussaint Louverture that created the independent nation of Haiti out of the French slave colony of St. Domingue in 1804. Haiti thereafter became a beacon of black liberation and accomplishment throughout the world, a feat to be emulated by other black communities under slavery's oppression and a source of fear for colonial plantation societies.

Slavery in Akan Societies and the Americas



This chapter is centred on the subject of slavery—definition, acquisition, utilization, rights and disabilities. An important aspect of the study is a comparative discussion of the institution of slavery in Africa and the Americas. Again, the account is designed to be brief in line with the goal of this book project. More detailed accounts of slavery can be found elsewhere, including Akosua Perbi's comprehensive study (2004) of indigenous African slavery.

My late mother Mrs. Elizabeth Asobo Ulzen-Adjaye was the oral historian par excellence in our extended matriclan. Before she passed away in 1993, she shared many anecdotal pieces in the family's history with me. On one occasion that left an indelible mark on my memory, she started constructing a family tree that went back some six generations. In addition to the sketch, what interested me most was that for each individual in the family tree, she attempted to provide an oral synopsis of who that person was and his or her background. However, I noticed that when she got to one cousin of mine, she avoided providing this background information and quickly skipped to the next person. This made me curious. I thought about it and found a suitable time for us to go back to the genealogy. Again, my mother glossed over this individual. I persisted and the third time she dismissingly said that he was a *sikaba*. At that point, since I also knew the implications of the term *sikaba*, I let the subject slip by and did not belabour the point any further.

My mother's reticence about the background of this individual is at the core of one of the persistent issues about slavery: the silence that surrounds the subject on all sides. *Sikaba* is derived from two Akan words, *sika* (money) and *ba* (child). Thus, *sikaba* refers to a person whose parent or parents had been acquired through purchase and hence a person of servile origins. What is significant in this discussion is that even though the individual in question was a highly successful professional, his servile origins had not been lost entirely. However, Akan societal conventions generally prohibit the disclosure of such origins, thus the saying, "*obi nkyerε obi ase*" (one does not disclose another person's origins). Inherent in this tradition is the question of a slave's heredity, which is at the crux of the distinction between indigenous African slavery and the institution of slavery in the Americas, a subject to which we shall return later in this chapter.

Defining slavery

To begin with, what is slavery? How do we define a slave? "Slavery refers to a condition in which individuals are held as property and exploited for their labour; absolute control is exercised over their lives" (Adjaye 1994:1754). The concept of slavery encompasses various forms of what is known as *dependent labour* based on the ownership and domination of one individual by another. Dependent labour implies that the labourer has no control over his life, work or the fruits of his labour. What distinguished slaves from other forms of dependent labour such as indentured servants, debt bondsmen, serfs and peons were their total powerlessness and the fact that slavery represented the most extreme form of domination. As an institution, slavery was once universal, existing in one form or another in practically all stratified societies. However, the institution was dynamic in the sense that it did not stay the same everywhere and over time.

Slavery could be found in one form or other in practically all the old states of South and Southeast Asia, including

China, Japan, India, Korea and the Philippines. In China, slavery is known to have existed as far back as the Shang dynasty in the eighteenth century B.C.E., where most slaves worked in the domestic sphere although some were engaged in agriculture, mining and craft industries. The Sanskrit Laws of Manu provide evidence that slavery existed in India by the first century B.C.E., with most slaves performing domestic and agricultural tasks. Slavery institutions were similarly commonplace in continental Europe—in the Germanic lands, Scandinavian territories during the Viking era, England where the Domesday Book of 1086 included entries on the number of slaves, Gaul (France), Russia, Poland, and many other countries. In the Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal) during the Middle Ages, the crusades between Muslim (Moorish) and Christian forces created an environment in which both sides regularly enslaved prisoners of war.

Similarly, slavery was closely integrated into the Muslim societies of the Middle East and Africa right from the beginning of Islam in the seventh century since Islamic law justified the conquest and enslavement of non-Muslims. But enslaved victims generated by conquest and holy wars became integrated into the existing social, political and economic order, as will be illustrated below. Finally, like practically all ancient societies, the peoples of sub-Saharan Africa practised some forms of slavery. Prisoners of war could be enslaved. Other methods of acquisition in indigenous slavery sometimes included victims of judicial processes and debt peonage.

Thus it can be concluded that slavery was universal in ancient societies although differences existed in the methods of enslavement and the utilization of slaves. Indeed, even though the origins of slavery date back to social stratification in ancient times, it was not until the Greek and Roman periods that slavery acquired the distinctive forms that have come to be associated with it legally and socially to the present day. It was the Greeks who transformed slavery from a primordial

fact into an institutionalized system that was indispensably embedded in their economy. Not only did Greek society become dependent on slave labour in the creation of the polis and its civilization, but slavery was integrated in the law of property. Hence the Greeks, followed by the Romans, created what has become known as a *slave mode of production*; in other words, societies where slavery is integrated into the very fabric of the economy as opposed to states where slave labour is only incidental to the economy. The Greeks and Romans promulgated various codes regulating the rights of slave-owners and the lives of their slaves; these were encompassed by the term *classical slavery*. Thus, it has been emphasized that the significance of slaves to a society lies not in their numbers but rather in the role they play in the economy. We shall return to the place of classical slavery in the evolution of “New World” slave regimes later.

For now, it is significant to point out that the slave codes of the Greek and Roman eras became the backbone of the slave laws of the American plantation systems, which ultimately came to define the generally accepted status of slaves. These are embodied in what we shall identify as the *constituent elements of slavery*:

- Chattel: a slave was considered as property or commodity that could be used, moved or sold at will by the owner. Outside agencies like the state or church could not intervene.
- Alienness: slaves were treated as alien to the society that enslaved them. They were outsiders who were characterized by kinlessness, having been uprooted from the natal societies and dehumanized into objects. They were denied the rights of free persons or the right to form legitimate families.
- Association with violence: slavery was almost virtually initiated by and sustained through violent methods such as warfare, kidnapping, raiding or banditry.

- Heredity: the legal status of a slave was usually hereditary. Offspring of slave parentage were born into slavery and belonged to the owner, not the biological parents.
- Economic exploitation: slavery was tied to labour, the enslaved often performing menial tasks.
- Lack of rights: slaves lacked legal rights and protections.
- Lack of control over reproductive rights: the sexual and reproductive rights of slaves were controlled by their masters. Marriages could not be contracted without the master's consent. Women were commonly treated as sexual objects while men could be castrated.
- Segregation: slaves typically lived in segregated compounds apart from the rest of society.

We shall return later to employ these *constituent elements of slavery*—as they pertained in the American regimes—as the basis of comparison with indigenous African slavery.

Comparative slave systems

Forms of slavery varied both in Africa and in the “New World”. In general, slavery in Africa was not heritable – that is, the children of slaves were free – while in the Americas, children of slave mothers were considered born into slavery. This was connected to another distinction: slavery in West Africa was not reserved for racial or religious minorities, as it was in European colonies, other than isolated cases of sacrificial rituals, for example, in the Cameroon (Thornton 1995: 122)), the treatment of slaves in Africa was more humane than in the Americas.

For one thing, slaves in most places were often treated as part of the family, “adopted members”, with significant rights including the right to marry without their masters’ permission.

The Akan traditionally recognized a classification of non-free persons along a continuum. At the apex of unfreeness

was *donko* (pl. *nnonkofo*), which commonly referred to a non-Akan, an outsider, usually acquired through purchase (Agya Atwi 1980). However, sometimes the term was loosely used to refer to slaves who were specifically of Northern Ghana extraction. These *nnonkofo* usually had facial scarification (Rattray 1929: 33-38; Bowdich 1819:182-83), although not all *nnonkofo* were scarified. Asantehene Osei Tutu Kwame forbade the sale of “true” Asantes as slaves (Reindorf 1895: 142). The name *donko* may also be given to a child whose parents were experiencing infant mortality, a condition known among the Akan as *awomawuo*.

Next was *domum* (literally, *edom mu nipa*), that is, one out of many. This referred to a war captive (Agya Atwi 1980) or a slave given as a tribute from a dependent or tributary state (Rattray 1929: 33-38). This class of people belonged to the state.

The next level down was *akoa*, literally meaning a servant. In the context of master-servant relationships (*akoa* versus *wura*), *akoa* could arise out of a voluntary or involuntary situation. In general terms, however, *akoa* could simply mean a “subject”. Thus, the king could regard all his people as *nkoa*, that is, his subjects. Here, nothing derogatory was impugned, in much the same way as a “believer” sees himself in relationship to God as an *akoa*. Asantehene Osei Tutu Kwame, addressing his councilors in the presence of visiting British emissary Joseph Dupuis said of himself: “I am a thankful slave of the God of all gods and men” (Dupuis 1824: 248).

Finally, was the class of *awowa*, a pawn. The *awowa* typically derived from indebtedness. He or she served as a pledge or security. The *awowa* performed unpaid service to the lender until the money was repaid. According to Agya Atwi (1980), the practice was similar to the pawning of jewelry or personal property today. The practice of pawning originated among families in the same community and out of circumstances of dire necessity. However, a proviso always existed for the

redemption of the pawn, and this was expected to be done at the earliest opportunity. Therefore, if the pawner family failed to avail itself of the opportunity of redeeming the pawn, it became a source of permanent disgrace (Casely Hayford 1903: 83).

In general, therefore, people were pawned to raise funds to meet extraordinary family commitments. The practice seemed to have been confined originally to families already related by marriage, in which case blood relations and mutual social obligations militated against the abuses that were later to become manifest in the system when it became more widespread and people were sometimes indiscriminately pawned into households that were wholly unrelated to that of the debtor by ties of either affinity or consanguinity. Casely Hayford elaborated with regards to the Fante:

People generally pawned their relatives with persons they knew well, and who, they felt sure, would be kind and considerate to the pawns. In some cases it took the form of training for the boy or girl, and instances are known where pawns have, after redemption, elected to remain with their guardians (1903: 83).

Rattray confirmed that with respect to the Asante, the practice of pawning was not in the beginning “nearly as pernicious a habit as at first sight the institution appears to have been” (1929: 55). In emphasizing the relatively benign state of pawning, he asserted that it originated as a system:

to register and evidence a loan. In the hands of the pawnee, the pawn served as a charge upon the loan advanced. Thus the system originated, not in a barbarous spirit of enslaving people of the same community, but as a guarantee of good faith to return a *quid pro quo* for help rendered in the hour of need (1929: 50).

All told, the Akan pawn held a position that was in effect half-way between the status of a slave and that of a free person. However, there was some degree of vulnerability built into the system, for pawning could arise, as stated above, out of the indebtedness of the person being pawned, or the insolvency of another member of his or her family, or even, in some rare cases, as a result of recalcitrant criminality. Slaves could also be pawned. In all cases, however, procedures regulating the system existed. A contract was entered into between the creditor's family and that of the debtor and such contracts were sealed with *aseda* (a drink and token money offered in thanksgiving of the deal), in accordance with customary law. The family head oversaw the process in consultation with family elders.

As has been pointed out above, if the debtor family was unable to provide the money or raise it through further pawning, the pawn could be sold into slavery. Once again, however, legal procedures existed regulating the process. Family representatives from both parties would meet, presided over in some cases by the chief, to facilitate the transaction.

At the lowest level was *akyere*, a slave convicted of capital punishment but whose punishment was stayed. He went about his normal duties and could even marry. However, the capital punishment was inheritable through the female line (Rattray 1929: 33-38).

Slaves were often demanded as part-condition of peace settlements from the vanquished party. Bowdich observed that "most of the slaves in Coomassie were sent as part of the annual tribute of Inta, Dagwumba, and their neighbours, to Ashantee" (1819: 332-33). This was confirmed by Beecham who noted that in the 1840s, the annual tribute of both Gonja and Dagomba included, "besides 200 cows, 400 sheep, 400 cotton cloths . . . 500 slaves" (1841: 88). However, the greatest number of slaves was acquired as war captives.

There were instances where a sub-category of slaves known as *akoa pa* (literally “good slave”) existed. Such people were members of the family whose conduct was deemed habitually detrimental to not only the entire family but also the community. Such habitual offenders could be pawned away. Again, however, established procedures existed and the head of the family had the responsibility of overseeing the practice.

Murder could be commuted to a fine of slaves. Meredith observed that among the Fante, the legal process allowed murder or death penalties to be commuted to slaves or their value (1812: 27; Hutton 1821: 90).

Another practice involving the seizure of indebted people was *panyarring*. This may be described as the less regulated form of pawning whereby a creditor whose patience is exhausted seizes the debtor or a member of his family (or property) as a slave, and he or she can be redeemed only by the repayment (Bowdich 1819: 257). This practice was more widespread in the non-Akan areas of the Gold Coast where law and order was less effective. As Daendels observed (1964: 256), *panyarring* found no place in Asante because law and order was “great” there. The more common practice in Asante was the system whereby a recalcitrant’s debtor’s relative was seized and brought over to the debtor to compel him to make payment and where payment was made, an additional fee was paid as compensation. The practice was susceptible to abuse.

People of servile origins who were recruited into Akan society were utilized in remarkably varied ways unlike in plantation societies where they were employed primarily as a source of harsh labour. In the first place, slavery provided a primary source of recruitment for the establishment of the office of the Asantehene’s household attendants known as *Gyaase* in the beginning (Adjaye 1984 [1996]: 18). Many of those who were acquired in this way were employed to perform a variety of household chores and a myriad of

service (*âsom*) functions, as European visitors to Kumase during the 19th century including Bowdich, Dupuis, Hutton, Ramseyer and Kühne observed and commented upon. These household functionaries included stool carriers, drummers, umbrella carriers, caretakers of the royal mausoleum, bathroom attendants, and hammock carriers, etc. For the same reasons, individuals of considerable means and wealth could acquire slaves as household servants, as many in Elmina did. Slaves could also perform agricultural tasks and portage. In these cases, males were preferred. However, slaves could be acquired for the express reason of increasing an owner's family size, particularly in cases where the owner was childless. In these instances, females were preferred and could marry into the owner's family. As Perbi affirmed, "[I]t was not uncommon to find men with barren wives buying female slaves to marry for purposes of procreation" (108). Additionally, slaves could be sold to liquidate a debt or rid a family of criminals, as has been pointed out above.

Asante had a long-standing arrangement with the Dutch in Elmina by which they sold *nnonkofo* to them either for agricultural purposes or as military recruits to be sent to Java (Ellis 1893: 253-4). Ramseyer also confirmed that Asante made payment for goods received from the British in 1871 in slaves, and the British government officials did not hesitate to settle accounts this way, although it was illegal (Ramseyer and Kühne 1875: 140). Finally, slaves could be given away in token of, and to cement, friendship. Freeman recorded that he received a gift of a slave from Asantehene Kwaku Dua (1844: 62-63). Slaves, in such instances, were expected to serve the new master and were not to be maltreated since the practice was embedded in trust.

Even though slavery in Akan societies was a condition of servitude, it was guided by legal rights. The slave could marry into the family and in fact marriage provided an effective vehicle for assimilating slaves into the society. In her comprehensive study of indigenous slavery in Ghana,

Akosua Perbi observed that “[s]laves, whether male or female who got married to free men or free women and especially to those of royalty, had their slave status virtually annulled. (5). She concluded:

... whenever a slave was acquired, he/she was integrated into the family. It was the first traditional rule with respect to the acquisition and treatment of slaves. The slave in Ghana invariably became part of his/her owner's household and part of the owner's family, lineage and clan. He/she was given a new name – the family name or any name the owner cared to give him as part of the process of integrating him/her to the family (8).

Furthermore, if the marriage was properly contracted and concluded with *aseda* (thanksgiving), that is, payment of a fee which legalized the marriage, the husband could claim adultery rights against the offending male, and where the adulterer was the slave's own master, Asante law demanded the payment of double damages (Rattray 1929: 40-41).

Slaves could also own and inherit property. It was not uncommon for a master to encourage a good slave and help him own property. Rattray stated in no uncertain terms that a master could give his slave a piece of land to cultivate and “this would belong to the slave as surely as it would in the case of a free man” (1929: 40-41). Among the Fante, instances were known of slaves inheriting their masters' property in cases where there were no males from the female line to succeed (Bowdich 1819: 254). This was confirmed by Casely Hayford who was struck by a situation in which, when the master's “line of descent failed, he promptly named the slave as his heir” (1903: 82).

The legal rights accorded slaves extended to court appearances. Slaves could be sworn as competent witnesses in court after taking the appropriate oaths, and cases were known of slaves winning legal suits against free persons

(Rattray 1929: 40-41). A slave could sue and be sued, and through the legal rights of ownership, the master was responsible for the actions of his slave, including debts he may incur. Above all, slaves had the opportunity for upward mobility. Many could, in fact, amass personal wealth and a slave might acquire sufficient wealth for him to purchase a slave of his own.

In some cases, people of servile origins were paid for their labour. Daendels observed that the Dutch not only paid their slaves regular wages for their agricultural work but also provided conditions under which the old and the infirm could be pensioned. Sometimes they received payment in kind in the form of imported items (1964: 46).

Further, the relatively low incidence of runaway cases would seem to indicate that in general the Akan slave received comparatively kind treatment. There was no specific work designated as slave work as enslaved persons worked alongside free persons. Slaves had the liberty of “dashing” themselves to a free person or to a deity, which in some measure insulated them against maltreatment (Hutton 1821: 320). Daendels revealed that the Dutch in Elmina and other towns adjoining their fortifications had regulations in place that urged all cases of illtreatment of slaves to be reported to the government (Daendels 1964: 201).

Comparison of Akan and American Slavery

Variable	Akan	Americas
Acquisition	Through multiple sources including war captives, tribute and indebtedness	Through violence, such as war, raiding, kidnapping, banditry, and purchase
Utilization	Principally for marriage, domestic labour and in some cases agriculture	Exclusively used for plantation labor such as sugar, tobacco, and cotton cultivation
Gender preference	Females	Males

Residence	Integrated into families	Slave quarters segregated from rest of society
Heredity	Status non-hereditary and disappeared after several generations; institutional assimilation	Status hereditary and transferable to offspring
Legal rights	Had legal rights; rights of protection against maltreatment; could sue and be sued	Chattel, no rights; condemned to social death.

Rattray was seemingly impressed by these rights to discern that the Asante slave “in nine cases out of ten, possibly became an adopted member of the family, and in time his descendants so merged and intermarried with the owner’s kinsmen that only a few would know of their origin”. As a matter of fact, as already stated, a cardinal aspect of Asante slavery institution was that societal conventions prohibited the disclosure of someone’s servile origins. Rattray concluded that the slave’s rights in Asante “seemed in many instances practically the ordinary privileges of any Ashanti free man, with whom, in these respects, his position did not seem to compare so unfavourably” (1929: 42). In short, avenues existed for the institutional assimilation of slaves into the general society. All told, slavery was “a state of servitude guided by rights” (Perbi:130).

Casely Hayford affirmed in no uncertain terms: “Gold Coast slavery was neither the slavery of ancient Rome, nor that of Afro-American history. He [the slave master] went as far as to consider the slave a member of his family and to adopt him as such” (1903: 82).

Nevertheless, people of servile origins suffered some disabilities and a stigma that could last generations. In some cases, as Rattray noted (1929: 44-45), a slave could not pass from a condition of complete bondage to one of complete freedom and had to do so in stages by traversing the intermediate stage of first becoming a pawn. Also, no

matter how closely a slave or a person of servile origins was assimilated into the society, reference to his origins, though publicly forbidden, could be made in private as the discussion above relating to my cousin demonstrates. Further, slaves were buried in a separate section of the cemetery. Indeed, slaves were not generally considered worthy of a decent burial. As Freeman observed, “ [A]ll slaves, except a few favoured ones, are considered not worthy of the trouble of a decent burial, and are consequently taken, and thrown into the water which runs round the town” of Kumase (1898: 135). A slave could also be sacrificed on the death of a royal.

Slave owners sometimes assigned certain answer names to each of their slaves. When the master called the slave, he would respond by that particular answer name which was often based on common sayings or proverbs, or derived from the condition under which he was acquired. In some cases, the master would say only a part of the answer name known in Twi as *nnyeso din* and the slave would call out the ellipsis, or the master could say the *nnyeso din* itself and the slave would repeat it. However, the use of these answer names was confined to only the master and his slave (Rattray 1929: 46). In general, distinctions existed between slaves and free person and in spite of all the rights slaves were entitled to, a slave might never forget, no matter how high he rose, that he was still a person of servile origins.

Impact of the Slave Trade



It is difficult to assess the total impact of a phenomenon as complex as the European slave trade and one that lasted nearly four centuries. The slave trade's impact is in many ways immeasurable. Further, many parts of the continent were affected differently at various times. The geographical scope of slave trading activities often penetrated beyond the coastal areas to reach the hinterland. In the area of the Gold Coast, for example, it penetrated far inland to encompass not only Asante but also the Mossi and Dagomba peoples further north. Within Nigeria, slave captives were brought to the coast from as far north as the Muslim areas of Kano.

Debates among historians, sociologists, economists, anthropologists, psychologists and other disciplinary specialists regarding the impact, ideologies, implications and legacy of slavery will perhaps never end. This is because it is a highly controversial subject. However, while there are many divergent views and perspectives on the issues, it is commonly recognized that the impact of the slave trade was both short – and long-term.

The contrasting views expressed by historians J. D. Fage of Britain and A. Adu Boahen of Ghana long ago epitomize the intense debate surrounding the issue. In 1969, Fage stated that the slave trade was a “big business” that contributed substantially to the economies of West Africa (1969: 81). In contrast, Adu Boahen saw it differently and boldly asserted in

1965 that “the slave trade did not confer benefits of any kind on West Africa”, and was in fact “an unmitigated misery – a crime unredeemed by any extenuating circumstance” (1965 [1986]: 109). Both Fage and Boahen are gone, but the debate lives on largely because the views held by the two have strong racial overtones that reverberate to this day and have pitted scholars into two camps with divergent perspectives. However, it is now generally recognized that while it is possible for one to discern some limited short-term benefits from the slave trade, the overall impact was grossly negative.

Depopulation and Demography

For a long time, scholars debated the question of how many people were lost to Africa as a result of the slave trade. Until the 1960s, most of the numbers provided were either speculative or what you might call “guesstimates”. Then, in 1969, Philip D. Curtin published his *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census*, which pioneered the application of statistical methods to African slave trade demographic studies. However, Curtin’s overall figure of 9.5 million (1969: 88) was subsequently challenged by a number of scholars who claimed that his number grossly underestimated mortality rates. Consequently, alternate estimates were advanced that initially ranged from 15 to 50 million on the high side. Now, as a result of revised figures by Paul E. Lovejoy (1989), Inikori (1992) and others, the generally accepted number is 12 million. But irrespective, even the modest figure of 12 million would make the slave trade the largest holocaust in history.

Moreover, this figure is based on port figures for Africans who were landed alive in the Americas, and does not take into account those who lost their lives in the hazardous operations involved in the capture of victims and their forced march to the coast, the wars that became rampant or endemic, the detention of captives in forts and castles while awaiting shipment, and the horrific traversing of the Atlantic known as the *Middle Passage*. Each of these stages was fraught with

immense brutalities that resulted in a tremendous loss of lives (Manning 1992: 117-44). Whether in cases of depopulation or the aggrandizement of some kingdoms that had a direct political benefit at the expense of neighbouring states, the human toll is unfathomable. Large parts of the continent simply suffered political destabilization or instability. There were denuded enclaves—the so-called “empty spaces”—in many parts of Africa. Many of these were once-fertile areas that had been devastated after slave trading expeditions or from which people had fled.

But numbers alone do not tell the full story. The dehumanization that a whole continent's peoples suffered has continuing repercussions even today. The captives were forced to march to the coast in slave caravans, often enduring long journeys of weeks or even months, shackled to one another. Those who fell sick or became weary of the march were left to die. An estimated 10 to 15 percent of the captives died on their way to the coast. Those who reached the coast were imprisoned in unsanitary dungeons in the European castles, often for months until they could board ships bound for the Americas. On the *Middle Passage*, the Africans were packed in decks too low for standing. The men were chained in pairs, either wrist to wrist or ankle to ankle, often lying in each other's feces or urine. In these cramped spaces, dysentery, smallpox, yellow fever and other communicable diseases were rampant. Atrocities and sexual abuse of the enslaved captives were widespread.

Demographic Impact

The demographic effect of enslavement on African societies is another contested area. How did the loss of millions of lives impact Africa? Initially, Basil Davidson (1961) and John Thornton (1995) contended that the demographic impact of the Atlantic slave trade on Africa was minimal. Thornton in fact argued that the population of the Kongo did not really decrease even though it was a major slave-exporting

kingdom. J. C. Miller (1981) also concluded that depopulation in Angola was more a consequence of natural disasters such as periodic droughts, famines, epidemics and general population movements and less of slave trading activities.

However, the consensus now is that Africa did not see any significant population growth during the period of the slave trade and that according to some estimates, the population actually remained stagnant at about 100 million. In contrast, during the same period Europe's population increased from 103 million to 274 million and that of Asia jumped from 257 million to 656 million (Rodney 1972: 97). The slave trade no doubt was the primary cause of the population disparities between Africa on the one hand, and Europe and Asia, on the other.

Positions that minimized the demographic impact of the slave trade on Africa, however, were challenged by historians such as Rodney, Lovejoy, Inikori, Reynolds (1985), and Manning (1981; 1988), who insisted that the impact of the population loss was profound. Manning actually applied a simulation model that similarly affirmed that the population of Western Africa fell between 1730 and 1850.

Proponents of the slave trade such as Fage contend that the dislocations and disruptions brought about by the slave trading operations were not significantly different from what the continent had been experiencing for centuries through its internal tribal warfare. Fage further argued in positive terms that the slave trade was in fact a means for some African elites to gain economic advantages. Fage concluded that while African political elites could have ultimately benefited from the slave trade, their decision to participate may have been influenced more by what they could lose by not participating since "there were really few effective means of mobilizing labour for the economic and political needs of the state" without the slave trade (Fage 1969 : 400).

These arguments obscure the plain facts that notwithstanding the stimuli for political aggrandizement

that some powerful states found in the slave trade, whatever gains that were realized were temporary and were achieved at the expense of their weaker neighbours and at a heavy cost of population dislocation, devastation and loss.

Moreover, the large-scale importation of guns into the continent led to what has been described as the “gun-slave cycle”. While some leaders acquired slaves in order to trade them for guns, others sold slaves to get more guns in order to protect their states. Thus the importation of guns increased warfare and militaristic tendencies. The kingdom of Oyo in Nigeria and Dahomey were examples of states that were caught in this gun-slave cycle. The large-scale importation of firearms made wars more lethal.

This leads to the question of whether the creation of large-scale empires was a positive development, if we accept the notion that the importation of European weaponry had an impact on state development. The premise that the creation of empires is an index of human progress is disputable, given the presence of a number of acephalous and segmentary societies that nevertheless had their own inbuilt mechanisms for the maintenance of law and order in Africa.

The atmosphere of political uncertainty bred social chaos. After all, the most common trade items imported from Europe to be exchanged for human cargo were guns and gin which are instruments of brutality and destruction.

The long-term impact is even more infinite. The figure of 12 million cited above does not tell the full story. It represents only those who made it to the Americas. It is estimated that for every single captive who endured and survived transportation to the “New World”, another African soul lost his life in the cruel operations associated with the enslavement processes. Thus it can be assessed that a total of at least some 24 million Africans were lost. These represented people in the prime of their lives, between the ages of roughly 14 and 30, the human and intellectual capacity of the continent. Ironically, it was not so much the survival of the fittest; rather, it was

the old, infirm and weakest that survived the depredations of the slave trade. In consequence, whole generations were permanently ruined.

Economic

Another contentious area is the economic impact of the slave trade on Africa. Here, again, there are two diametrically opposed camps. One side of the debate was spearheaded by Rodney and Inikori who contended that the slave trade unquestionably led to the underdevelopment of the continent. According to Rodney (1972), the millions of Africans who were uprooted from their homes and sent to the Americas as slave labor robbed Africa of the most productive segments of its population as well as the next generation of leaders and nation builders. In addition, the slave trade and the continual wars it engendered created a climate of fear and uncertainty that stagnated and in some cases even retarded economic development. In an atmosphere of chaos and extreme trepidation, industries like metallurgical and textile pursuits for which Africa had been renowned floundered.

Both Rodney and Inikori in addition argued that African industrial development was further constrained by the kind of products that Europeans imported. They contended that they were mostly items of warfare like guns and ammunitions or cheap manufactures such as inferior pots and gin—commodities that did not stimulate the production process in any way. For example, in the early 19th century, after the Napoleonic wars, there was a surplus of guns, most of which were outmoded, that came to be dumped in Africa. These cheap and inferior imported goods nonetheless impeded the African initiative to produce local substitutes. This was particularly true of the indigenous textile industry which saw no technological advancement throughout the period under consideration. Alcohol had a distinctly pernicious effect in that it was used to spur Africans into abducting captives.

These views were complemented by Henry A. Gemery and Jan S. Hogendorn (1979) who concluded that the slave trade created not only enormous political and social dislocations, but also long-term economic decline in West Africa, leading to indelible deterioration in general welfare.

In the opposing school are scholars of the Eurocentric persuasion who argue that the negative economic impact of the slave trade on Africa was rather minimal. Basil Davidson, for all his sensitive insights into Africa in many areas, rejected the view that indigenous industries collapsed and contended that textile, smelting and agricultural production, for example, continued in Africa as before. This position was somewhat supported by A. G. Hopkins (1973) who maintained that in his view the claim that the importation of foreign goods had led to the decline of local industries has not been supported, as far as the evidence for West Africa is concerned, and dismissed the idea that the loss of African labour force through the slave trade was linked to underdevelopment (121-122).

Walter Rodney's thesis is worthwhile examining in some detail. Prior to the 15th century, he argued, Africa had witnessed considerable growth in a number of indigenous industries including metalware, pottery, glass, iron-working, gold and silver smithing, basketry, leatherworks, woodworks and clothing. Now, with the onset of the slave trade, Africans began to turn away from these industries as they realized that it was quicker and easier to obtain manufactured products by way of European imports than making them themselves. Thus African industries suffered neglect and ultimately societies wallowed in economic stagnation, leading in the long run to underdevelopment. Another significant economic change was the shift in trade orientation from intra-Africa and trans-Saharan trade to maritime and trans-Atlantic commerce.

Walter Rodney buttressed his argument by comparing the economic resources of Europe and Africa at the start of the slave trade in the 16th century. He claimed that Africa and Europe were practically at par in terms of technological

development; that, in fact, in some areas like economic resources Africa was ahead.

Take gold accumulation as an example. It was gold from the great empires of West Africa – Ghana, Mali and Songhay – that provided the means for the economic take-off of Europe in the 13th and 14th centuries and initially aroused Europe's interest in western Africa. In the 14th century, the empire of Mali, which was larger than all of Western Europe, was reputed to be one of the richest and most powerful states in the world. When the emperor of Mali, Mansa Musa, went on a pilgrimage to Mecca via Cairo in 1324, he was said to have put so much gold in circulation that the world price of bullion dramatically plummeted—something similar to the stock market crashing today.

However, during the period of slavery, the population of Europe grew exponentially whereas that of Africa remained stagnant, as has been noted. Walter Rodney argued that the export of so many people had been a demographic disaster which left Africa permanently disadvantaged when compared to other parts of the world, and it largely explains the continent's continued poverty. At the same time, the profits from slavery were used to fund economic growth and technological advancement in Europe. In fact, Rodney asserted that it was profits from the plantation economies of the “New World” achieved through the sweat of African slave labour that sustained and fueled the industrial revolution. Thus, Europe gained in capital formation and industrialization at the expense of Africa and the American colonies. Hence, the root cause of African underdevelopment today lies in the slave trade of the 16th to the 19th centuries. It was this situation that was also responsible for the dependency relationship that continues to exist between the richer North and the poorer South. This argument has been supported by subsequent generations of Africanist scholars.

These views were obviously rooted in Marxism. In his influential economic history of capitalism, Karl Marx

stated that “...the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black-skins, signaled the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production”, affirming that the “primitive accumulation” of capital made possible Britain’s industrialization (1867).

Social

The disruption of families, atmosphere of chaos, environment of uncertainty and the feeling of insecurity occasioned by the prevalence of wars associated with slave trading, or the raiding and kidnapping activities motivated by the desire to enslave victims are generally acknowledged. These disruptions prevented Africans who were not even involved in slave trading from doing their normal businesses in peace and security without the threat of being kidnapped and sold to Europeans. In short, social and political stability were profoundly affected.

The impact of the gender imbalance inherent in slave exports has also been pointed out in view of the fact that slavers preferred men as a source of labour in the Americas. Claire Robertson and M. Klein, Inikori, and Lovejoy have all shown that the ratio of women to men was generally 1:2. Patrick Manning (1981) demonstrated that the ratio of males to females in the export trade affected marriage as well as birth rates in Africa. Following this trend, John Thornton pointed out that, among other things, imbalance in sex ratios altered the very institution of marriage. While polygyny was already present in Africa at the time the slave trade began, the general preponderance of women, he asserted, tended to encourage it and allowed it to become much more widespread. In her study, Katherine Lamie (2007) in fact argued that the negative effects of polygyny affected traditional social structures. Be that as it may, gender imbalance had serious implications for population growth in many African states.

Legacy

It is contended that the most pervasive legacy of the slave trade and slavery is racism. This derives from the fact that only in the European slave trade was race a factor of enslavement. Further, the ideology of race was employed in the subjugation of enslaved Africans in the Americas where racially-driven slave codes rigidly controlled their lives and deprived them of the rights normally accorded citizens. Slavery was buttressed by ideologies of African inferiority and European superiority, and was both born of and sustained by racism.

It was pointed out in the preceding chapter that though slavery dates to antiquity, it was the Greeks and Romans who transformed it into a mode of production. Yet, one does not today see a legacy of racism in Greece and Rome because whites enslaved other whites (Finley 1980). In contrast, racial discrimination continues to exist in the United States because race was employed as an instrument in the enslavement of Blacks in “New World” slavery. Nonetheless, does the fact that Greek and Roman civilization, which the West admires so much, was built upon slave labour exonerate them? No. There is plenty of blame to share in the slave trade. However, as Thompson concluded, “it is an historical absurdity to suggest that both Africans and Europeans should be blamed to the same extent for the African Holocaust or *Maafa*” (2008: 87).

The unequal relationship entailed in slavery ultimately created the conditions for the subsequent colonial conquest of Africa by the European powers and bequeathed a legacy of inequality that still subsists in Africa’s relations with the Western world today. Through centuries of contact with Africa, Europeans insinuated themselves into the economic, political and social lives of Africans that paved the way for the colonial onslaught.

Recently, some studies on the long-term repercussions of slavery on Africa by Bailey, Bellagamba, Greene, Klein and others have been giving greater attention to *African voices*. Dwelling on the memories of chiefs, elders and others left

behind by the slave trade rather than images filtered through the eyes and records of Europeans, Bailey (2005) revealed that Africans were both traders and victims of the human traffic, though they were not equal partners with Europeans. Nonetheless, like victims of trauma, their involvement had devastating consequences on their history and sense of identity. This has caused them to experience a fragmented view of their past which partially explains the blanket of silence and shame they exhibit about the subject of the slave trade.

Following the same historiographic line, Bellagamba, Greene and Klein, in two edited volumes titled *African Voices*, underscore the significance of the perspectives of enslaved men and women that are culled, not from conventional European sources, but from hitherto less-explored authentic African sources including folklore, oral traditions, songs, proverbs and life histories.

The African Diaspora

The African diaspora refers to communities or groups of African descent who have been dispersed from their homeland continent to other parts of the world and continue to maintain linkages with the motherland (Adjaye 2003). Thus the African diaspora can be found on practically all continents outside Africa. The word diaspora is derived from a Greek word meaning “scattering” and was originally applied to the Jewish dispersal. Since the 1990s, studies have expanded on other diaspora populations that are scattered throughout the world.

There have been streams of African dispersals from historic times, including Africans taken across the Red Sea and Indian Ocean by Arabs to the Middle East, Indian sub-continent, and southeastern Asia beginning in the 8th century. Individuals and groups of Africans also crossed the Atlantic to settle in Central America and the Caribbean long before Christopher Columbus’ voyages to the region. But the largest movement

of people of African descent to leave the continent involved the 12 million or so who were uprooted from their homes and families and transplanted to the Americas through the slave trade between the 16th and 19th centuries. Since then, there have also been waves of emigrants from Africa through a variety of causes including economic and political determinants that constitute the modern diaspora. Thus the cause of the African diaspora can be both voluntary and involuntary.

However, as several scholars including Sidney Lemelle and Robin D. G. Kelley, Patrick Manning and I have emphasized, diasporaness is a conscious and active, not a passive process. In other words, an African living outside his home continent does not constitute part of the diaspora unless he or she consciously and actively seeks to reconnect with his origins through a variety of ways such as pilgrimages, or cultural, religious, linguistic, musical, and artistic creations and forms. This is why the African Union defines the African diaspora as consisting of people of African origin living outside the continent, irrespective of their citizenship and nationality and who are willing to contribute to the development of the continent.

A less common application of the term diaspora is what is known as *internal diasporas*, that is, Africans who have either left their homes or been displaced to other locations within Africa. Thus, we can talk of a Hausa diaspora or an Akan diaspora in West Africa of people who live outside their original homes but on the continent.

Conclusion

Thompson concludes that “the impact on the [West African] region as a whole was quite negative, though in the short term individual groups, and more particularly rulers, might have received small advantages from the [slave] trade” (2008: 67). He reminded us that one tends to forget to consider the impact of the slave trade on the victims themselves whose

homes were destroyed, families ravaged, and crops wiped out. As if this was not enough, they suffered untold violence and dehumanization at multiple levels—during capture; the march to the coast; the detention in slave dungeons; the trans-continental Middle Passage; “seasoning” on arrival in the Americas; and plantation life itself. When they arrived on the coast, the dehumanization continued. They were treated like merchandize and herded into barracoons. Before being sold, the European purchaser would strip them naked and examine all parts of their bodies thoroughly. These methods of degradation and the atrocities of the institution of slavery itself led Thompson (2008) to characterize it as “the Maafa”, the African holocaust, a description not unlike Patterson’s characterization of “social death” earlier (1982).

Basil Davidson in fact affirmed that within 30 years of slave trading in the Kongo, the Portuguese had already left an indelible image among the people that slavery was “a social plague and a daily source of fear” (1961:138).

It was no exaggeration that a Dutch slaver drew the following conclusion of European relations with Africans: “From us they have learned strife, quarrelling, drunkenness, trickery, theft, unbridled desire for what is not one’s own, misdeeds unknown to them before” (Davidson 1991:198).

It is impossible to assess the complete impact of a phenomenon that was as devastating as the slave trade. In the foregone pages, an attempt has been made to capture some of the most obvious effects. There is no doubt that overall the slave trade profoundly diminished Africa’s potential to advance economically and uphold its social and political stability.

Where Do We Go from Here?

I offer the following recommendations:

- **Reparations**
Reparations claims for the slave trade and its legacy

have opened up a powerful debate in some quarters; the question is how to move forward. Fernne Brennan and John Packer (2011) have argued that the issue of reparations is predicated on the underlying assumption that the liability to make reparations is not extinguished on the death of direct victims or slavers, but that the trans-generational obligation remains to provide a remedy for the contemporary and current descendants of the transatlantic slave trade. Europeans' power to enslave Africans was based on a false premise that slavery was legal, but under international law, slavery was not legal at the time. And even when slavery was ultimately abolished, there is considerable evidence that a number of European states attempted to circumvent the laws banning slavery. There is a legitimate legal claim to reparations based on the gross violation of human rights.

Others have argued that the historical transgressors of slavery and the slave trade should compensate in the form of "beneficial technology transfer," that is, invest in technology, research and development, education, health and services. For opponents of reparation who may argue that some Africans were collaborators, it can be counter-argued that most were not 'willing' participants and more importantly, Africans did not create an institution that perceived them as inferior or subhuman. Reparations for the inhumanities of the slave trade should not be subject to any statute of limitations. After all, racism and economic disparities which Africans and people of African descent continue to suffer today as a legacy of slavery are not subject to any statute of limitations. Reparations should be about restorative justice since slavery was underpinned by violence, murder, rape, fraud and banditry.

- **Continued dialogues**

Continued dialoguing has the potential of breaking the silence that surrounds the subject among continental Africans, diasporan Africans and Europeans. Conferences, symposia, colloquia and other educational forums on the slave trade should be expanded as a means of improving true knowledge about the historical facts of the slave trade and thereby help in opening up the subject to discussion.

- **Improved education of guides**

In this regard, guides at the castles should be given proper education that would enable them to eschew Eurocentric perspectives. I remember, for instance, one occasion when I took a group of American educators who were mostly Blacks on a visit to Elmina Castle. Our tour guide's introductory narration contained so much European bias that I had to stop him at some point and take over the description myself.

- **Increased Africa-Diaspora interaction**

Sustaining and improving PANAFEST, joint Africa-Diaspora Carnival celebrations, economic cooperation, collaboration between continental and diasporan artists are all examples of what can be done cooperatively to help break the silence surrounding slavery and the slave trade.

Kingship in Elmina



This chapter provides an overview of kingship in Elmina, defines its nature and unique characteristics, and describes the processes by which kings are selected, enstooled (enthroned) and destooled (deposed).

As narrated in Chapters 1 and 2, in January 1482, a Portuguese fleet of ships under the command of Captain Dom Diogo d’Azambuja landed at Elmina. The Portuguese captain immediately set up a meeting with the local leader who was named in the Portuguese sources as “Caramansa”. At the meeting, d’Azambuja sought permission from Caramansa, that is, Kwamena Ansa, to build a fortification there for trading purposes. At first, Kwamena Ansa denied the request, but after persistent petitions he eventually gave his consent and the Portuguese proceeded to build the São Jorge fort that has since come to be popularly known as Elmina Castle, the first major European edifice in sub-Saharan West Africa.

That this event occurred is unequivocal in both Portuguese and oral sources. Indeed, all the known early records that described the establishment of Elmina Castle identified Kwamena Ansa (“Caramansa”) as the local leader with whom the Portuguese captain dealt with. These sources include Joao de Barros, an agent in the service of King Jaoa III, who published *Da Asia* in 1552; Manuel de Faria e Sousa’s *Asia Portuguesa*, published in 1630; and James Clarke’s *The Progress of Maritime Discovery*, 1805.

What these early sources are unclear about is an indication of the exact status of this local leader, which in part has led to the mistaken view held by some scholars that the institution of kingship was a much later development in Elmina, perhaps not until the 17th century.

So, what kind of leader was Kwamena Ansa? What was the nature of his authority and his power? Fortunately for the historian, there is abundant circumstantial written evidence, confirmed by orally-derived sources of information, to infer about the status of Kwamena Ansa and, by extension, the nature of Elmina kingship even in those early times. The Portuguese, after all, were more interested in dealing with whoever was identified as the local leader at the time than in delineating the exact position of this prominent personage. Further, one should understand that the specific titles of “chief” and “paramount chief” were creations of nineteenth century British colonialism that did not exist in the fifteenth century.

The composite picture we get from the known sources is that Kwamena Ansa was accompanied by a full retinue of subordinate rulers, attendants and musicians; that he was carried in a palanquin; and that he himself was richly adorned with gold ornaments around his neck, arms and legs. Kwamena Ansa, we are further told, had in fact gathered an armed force together, just in case. It is clear from this description that Kwamena Ansa portrayed a picture concomitant with that of an *omanhen* (king) who ruled over an independent state, as Mensah Sarbah (1968: 61) concluded. Indeed, Sarbah affirmed in no uncertain terms: “...when the Portuguese navigators and other European trading adventurers first appeared on the Gold Coast, they found an organized society having kings, rulers, institutions, and a system of customary laws” (v).

It can also be concluded from this description that Kwamena Ansa (and other traditional rulers like him) projected autonomy and agency way back in the fifteenth century;

they were certainly not powerless in their encounters with Europeans. Indeed, Kwamena Ansa, like his contemporary heads of indigenous polities, felt himself to be not only of an autonomous stature, but also on an equal footing with the European commanders. However, his independence notwithstanding, Kwamena Ansa's refusal to give an outright response to d'Azambuja demonstrates, in part, an aspect of indigenous African kingship where chiefs have to refer major decisions, especially those involving land alienation, democratically to their advisory councils before arriving at a final resolution. Also, Kwamena Ansa's independent action was suggestive that Elmina was not subordinate to the state of Eguafu, as some have claimed.

Yet, evidence of the exact nature and structure of the Elmina kingship institution itself did not appear in the written records until much later. By the seventeenth century, however, Dutch sources were giving clearer indications that the kingship institution in Elmina had crystallized. The demographic distribution of the town had also evolved by then. A Dutch map of 1629, for example, described Elmina as under the leadership of a "Caboceeer" (that is, king), and the town having been divided into three quarters, each under its own "Braffo" or Captain. Many similar descriptions appear in the *dagregister* (Elmina Journal) of the early eighteenth century. In fact, one could clearly see by then in operation a structured kingship institution of an *ohen* (king), below whom were captains (*abrafo*) who headed what had evolved into asafu companies (see chapter 8).

By the 1730s, the office of the king had in fact assumed the character of an omanhen (paramount chief). This is clearly the indication that one gets from the titles of the Elmina chiefs who were signatories to agreements with the Dutch Governor-Generals known as "Pen" and "Contracts". The Elmina chiefs were typically described as "Upper Kings" or "First Kings." Sometimes there were also "Under Kings," an indication that the structure included a sub-chief as heir

apparent. As Henige concluded, this practice confirms that by the eighteenth century “the office of *omanhen* had crystallized into recognizable form (1974: 507).

An examination of the detailed records that the Dutch maintained further indicates that in about one-half of the stool successions between 1732 and 1869, the Under King was “promoted” to King when a vacancy occurred. Though the Under King was often the next in command, there were a few cases where he could have been the Tufohen (head of all the asafo companies).

The *omanhen* of Elmina rules by a system of monarchical succession, as in other Akan states. Also by the eighteenth century, the Dutch records indicate that in addition to the *omanhen*, the original division of Elmina into three quarters had grown into seven, each headed by a Vaandrig, the genesis of the seven asafo companies (see chapter 8 below).

Today, the *omanhen* typically must be a member of the Nyampa Asafo Company and belong to either the Nsona or Anona Ebusua (matriclan). Under the paramount chief are a number of divisional chiefs and sub-chiefs.

Selection and Installation of omanhen

In Elmina, as throughout Akan societies, the person of the *omanhen* is considered sacred by virtue of the office he occupies, the powers vested in him, and the oath that he takes and is administered to him at the time of his enstoolment. He is therefore accorded reverence by his subjects. The *omanhen*'s royal regalia include the stool, state umbrella, palanquin, swords, staffs and state jewelry.

Upon the death of the *omanhen*, the Nyampafo (members of the No. 7 asafo company), as the recognized electors and kingmakers, consider all the eligible candidates and nominate a successor. Upon his acceptance and the payment by his *ebusua* of the customary fee to the asafo, the candidate is presented to the Tufohen and Supifo, the heads of the asafo companies (see chapter 8), for election, while his background

is investigated to determine if there are any moral defects that would debar him from becoming king. Upon passing this test, he undergoes a period of confinement and other preparatory activities which may last from three to thirteen weeks.

The installation activities begin at dawn. The newly elected king would be taken to Nkonduamu and Atradamu, two sacred pools in Bantoma where he will be given a ritual bath, following which he undergoes an act of ritual dressing. Then, led by members of the royal household and amidst drumming, he is conducted to Dapatam where he is welcomed by the asafo companies and the populace. At this point the sacred oaths of office are administered by the head of the Abrafo (constabulary).

J. Sylvanus Wartemberg, who published *São Jorge d'El Mina, Premier West African European Settlement*, the first book on Elmina in 1950, was a scholar well acquainted with the town's history and culture as head of one of the Ebiradze matriclans. His translation of the oath that is administered to the *ɔmanhen* (98) is reproduced here in extenso because of its significance:

Dependable God, Mother Earth. The Sea. Today is Thursday. By the power now in me vested, by Almighty God, and the seventy-seven Abosom [deities] of El Mina, I succeed this day to the stool of my ancestors; it is mine by succession, and no power dare wrest it from me. I declare that I am ever ready to answer the call of the people by night or day or I violate the solemn oath taken this day. For protection, jurisprudence and wisdom I seek – to rule with patience, love and justice without fear or favour and may the gods help me.

Thereafter, the *ɔmanhen* is led to the Ntona Buw (shrine) where the Komfo (chief priest) in turn conducts a religious invocation. From this point the newly installed *ɔmanhen* is paraded through the town, led by the asafo in their full

paraphernalia, stopping to pour libation at every site that is considered an abode of a deity.

Though some Western scholars have tended to describe the ɔmanhen as dictatorial, the fact of the matter is that he rarely made day-to-day policies. Matters affecting the state would be deliberated in council, a consensus would be reached, and the decision would be announced by *dawur* (gong-gong). In theory and in practice the ɔmanhen did not act alone. In this sense, he is expected to be more of a leader than a ruler.

The ɔmanhen is the legislative, executive and judicial head of the Edina state. First, as the administrative head, he is responsible for the maintenance of law and order and is the ultimate authority in all matters affecting the welfare of the state and its citizens. Second, as the judicial head, he presides over the king's court, which serves as the final court of appeal. Thirdly, the ɔmanhen is the religious head of the state, the direct intermediary between the citizens and the ancestral spirits that guard the state. Fourthly, in military matters, he is the Commander-in-Chief and carries the responsibility and right of the final arbiter in matters of war and peace. Finally, the ɔmanhen has the ultimate authority in matters involving land use and land alienation, and this is why Kwamena Ansa had the right and authority to cede land to the Portuguese.

Like all Akan chiefs, the Edina ɔmanhen's revenues include court fines and market tolls. However, such revenues are considered stool wealth belonging to the office of the chieftaincy rather than personal income.

In theory, the ɔmanhen can reign till death. In practice, however, he can be destooled or removed from office for a variety of offences including cowardice, drunkenness, and failure to perform his duties. In such instances, the head of the Nyampa asafo, the kingmakers, gives him three warnings.

The oath that the ɔmanhen takes at the time of his accession to the stool, together with other sanctions, are supposed to serve as checks and balances against dictatorial and tyrannical tendencies. These include religious or supernatural sanctions,

that is, the fear of incurring the displeasure of the deities, and institutionalized or “diffuse” sanctions such as refusal to serve or outright rebellion.

Chronology of Elmina Kings

Below is a comparison of the official chronology of Edina kings provided by the State Council, on the left, with Wartemberg’s chronology, on the right. Since attempts to record chronologies by the stool house were a much later development, it is plausible that Wartemberg’s 1950 publication preceded the undated stool chronology which may even have drawn upon it. Hence there is very little difference between the two, except for the fact that Wartemberg traces the beginning of Kwaa Amankwaa’s reign to 1300, rather than 1320. This, however, is obviously speculative.

Kings during the matrilineal period

	Edina Stool List	Wartemberg Chronology
1320-1355	Nana Kobina Amankwaa	Nana Kwaa Amankwaa 1300-1355
1355-1390	Nana Kweigya Ansah	Nana Kweigya Ansa I
1390-1426	Nana Ampon Kuma	Nana Ampon Kuma
1426-1450	Nana Ebu I	Nana Ebu I
1450-1475	Nana Amankwaa II	Nana Amankwaa II
1475-1510	Nana Kwamena Kweigya	Nana Kwamena Ansa
	Ansah I	
1510-1545	Nana Kwamena Kweigya	Nana Kweigya Ansa II
	Ansah II	
1545-1572	Nana Kofi Ahen	Nana Kofi Ahen
1572-1605	Nana Essilfie Conduah	Nana Essilfie Conduah
1605-1660	Nana Ntakudzi I	Nana Ntakudzi I
1660-1680	Nana Ampon Dziedur	Nana Ampon Dziedur

Kings during the patrilineal period

1680-1720	Nana Ohenba Ebu II	Nana Ohenba Ebu II
1720-1760	Nana Anowi I	Nana Anowi I

1760-1820	Nana Dziewu I	Nana Dziewu I
1820-1868	Nana Kobina Conduah I	Nana Kobina Conduah
1868-1873	Nana Kobina Gyan I	Nana Kobina Gyan
(exiled by the British to Sierra Leone in 1873)		
1873-1884	Nana Kofi Atta (Regent)	Nana Kofi Atta (Regent)
1884-1898	Nana Kweku Andoh	Nana Kweku Andoh
1898-1901	Nana Kobina Gyan	Nana Kobina Gyan
(reinstated after his return from exile.)		
1901-1904	Nana Kobina Conduah II	Nana Kobina Conduah (destooled)
1904-1912	Nana Kwesi Mensah (destooled)	Nana Kwesi Mensa (destooled)
1912-1915	Nana Berand Annan (Regent)	Nana Berand Annan (Re- gent)
1915-1918	Nana Kojo Mensah	Nana Kodwo Konduah (destooled)
1918-1919	Nana Kwesi Conduah	Nana Kwesi Konduah (Regent)
1919-1930	Nana Kobina Ntakudzi (Regent)	Nana Ntakudzi II (Regent)
1931-1935	Nana Kojo Konduah	Nana Kodwo Konduah (re-ensooled)
1936-1938	Nana Dziewu II	Nana Dziewu II (Abdicated)
1938-1942	Nana Kobina Ntakudzi (destooled)	Nana Ntakudzi III (destooled)
1942-1944	Nana Kweku Ewusi (Regent)	Nana Kweku Ewusi (Regent)
1944-1948	Nana Kobina Ntakudzi (re-elected)	Nana Ntakudzi II as Kobina Gyan II (1945-1948)
1948-1948	Nana Kobina Gyan II	
1948-1979	Nana Kojo Conduah IV	1949: Nana Conduah IV
1979-1988	Nana Kojo Nguandoh (Regent)	
1988-1993	Nana Kofi Conduah V	
1993-1998	Nana Kwesi Tandoh (Regent)	
1998-	Nana Kojo Conduah VI	

Further comments are warranted. First, according to Elmina traditions of stool origins, and confirmed by Wartemberg, the Elmina kingship goes as far back as the early fourteenth century and that in fact Nana Kwamena Ansa (“Caramansa”) who granted permission to the Portuguese to build Elmina Castle was the sixth king. Both versions hence give weight to the fact that the kingship institution enjoys great antiquity. However, the name of the founder of the royal dynasty in the Elmina stool chronology above is mistakenly given as Kobina Amankwaa rather than the Kwaa Amankwaa that has been enshrined in traditional accounts.

Second, during the pre-Portuguese period when there was little, if any, written records, the kings were assigned long reigns, a feature not uncommon with oral reconstructions of chronologies, in order to infuse depth and stability into the stool’s early history. Thus, at least half of the first ten kings are said to have reigned for periods between 35 and 55 years. But by far the longest reign of all the Elmina kings is Nana Dziewu I’s. Traditional accounts tend to exaggerate his period of reign in crediting him with 60 years from 1760 to 1820, a view also upheld by Wartemberg (1950: 88). There is no doubt, however, that he had a long reign and in actual fact it was this longevity that gave rise to the sobriquet “Dziewu,” that is, “*obedzi hen a (kɛpɛm dɛ) obewu*,” i.e., he will reign until he dies. Third, as can be seen from both chronologies, succession in the beginning was along matrilineal lines until the reign of Nana Ohenba Ebu II, when it was switched to patrilineal inheritance. This change is explained below as well as the unsuccessful attempt to revert to matrilineal succession in the 1940s during a period of stool disputes.

Wartemberg who was an eye-witness to the events of the turbulent period from 1920-1950, provides more detail (1950: 87-94) about the vicissitudes that the Elmina crown faced at that time when there were several destoolments. However, his chronology ends in 1949 since his book was published a year later.

Kingship in Elmina shares some commonalities with Akan kingship institutions throughout Ghana and yet maintains some unique characteristics. As mentioned above, the office is considered sacred (Wartemberg 95, Rattray 81-3, Sarbah, Ayittey), for sacredness emanates from the stool rather than the person of the occupant of the stool, and therefore transcends his tenure; indeed, traditional accounts supporting longevity claim that in the past extended regnal lengths were also a concomitant of sacredness.

The kingship institution, like those of other traditional states in Ghana, is an elective system within a monarchical structure, that is, the head of the government is a king who is nonetheless elected from the royal lineage. The *omanhen's* executive authority is not autocratic. He is advised by Council and rules by consensus. Abuse of power is restrained by a system of checks and balances. The exercise of his power is also circumscribed by the oath of allegiance that he takes to the Oman (state) at the time of his installation and counterbalanced by his advisory council.

His senior officers consist of the *Kyeame* (metalinguist) and *Basonfo* (heads of the seven asafo companies) as advisers, *Gyaasehen* (head of the King's household), *Tufohen* (head of all the asafo companies), and heads of the military, namely, *Twafohen* (head of the advance guard), *Nifahen* (head of the right wing), *Benkumhen* (head of the left wing), and *Kyidomhen* (head of the rear wing). They constitute the legislative body.

The king is always served by a large number of attendants (*amanfo* or *asomfo*) who include *abrafo* (executioners), *nseniefo* (courtiers), *epitsifo* (storemen), and *suamfo* (palanquin bearers). Decisions are conveyed to the people by means of the *dawur* (gong-gong). *Benya Komfo*, as the mouthpiece of the titular deity, is the spiritual adviser to the King.

When the Edina State Council meets or undertakes matters affecting the whole state, the chiefs of the 26 constituent adjoining villages attend.

Patrilineal Succession

Today, succession to paramount stools in virtually all the Akan traditional states is matrilineal, except for Elmina and Shama, another coastal town just west of Elmina, which is patrilineal. There is evidence that succession to the stools of Oguaa (Cape Coast) and Effutu (Winneba) were similarly patrilineal, at least until the 1850s. How, when and why the Elmina stool became patrilineal is unclear. The fact that Elmina pre-dated other “Fante” states may have had something to do with this development. According to Feinberg (1989: 20-22) and other sources, the unique multi-ethnic character of the Elmina population may have contributed to the development of patrilineality. This view points to the cosmopolitan character of early Elmina and the resultant intermingling of locals, traders from the inland Gold Coast, European settlers, and West Africans imported by the Dutch from the Niger Delta and Benin as labourers and soldiers.

Traditional accounts, however, have a more plausible explanation for the origins of the practice of patrilineal inheritance to the Elmina stool going back to Nana Ampon Dziedur (1660-1680) and all the way back to Kwaa Amankwaa, the founding ancestor. This account claims that from the time of Kwaa Amankwaa, succession had been matrilineal until Ampon Dziedur unilaterally changed it as a result of a succession dispute. It is asserted that Nana Dziedur had a dispute with the state in which he was supported by his own sons and not the sons of his sister, that is, his nephews who would have stood in the direct line of succession. To insist on loyalty, Nana Dziedur disinherited his nephews and passed the succession to his sons who were in turn followed by descendants in the male rather than the female line. By the eighteenth century, the Dutch records were indicating that patrilineal succession had become the standard and accepted practice.

Then, in the 1940s, a vigorous but unsuccessful attempt was made to revert to matrilineal succession. Advocates for this change charged that Ampon Dziedur's action in changing the succession rule to patrilineal was arbitrary, unilateral and contrary to tradition. In March 1945, Nana Kweku Ewusie, chief of the Elmina outlying village of Simew who also served as Adontenhene and Regent of the Edina State, along with three others, were charged and found guilty of murdering a young girl with the intention of using her blood and body parts as "medicine" to help him win a bitter struggle over the stool succession and change the paramountcy from patrilineal back to matrilineal. The Bridge House murder, as the case was known, because the victim was enticed into that location and murdered there, tarnished the Elmina crown and its reverberations throughout the Gold Coast left a legacy of infamy in Elmina.

By the 20th century, the No. 7 Nyampa Asafo Company had become the kingmakers of the Elmina *omanhen*, although it is uncertain how far back this prerogative goes. What is known is that Nyampa was one of the original three companies before the number grew to seven. To buttress their right as kingmakers, the Nyampa Asafo members claim to be direct descendants of Kwaa Amankwaa. An entry in the *Elmina Journal* of 12 February 1811 confirmed that the No. 7 Company was "the first in rank" and had the privilege "to place the newly elected King on the stool." The preponderant position of the Nyampa as kingmakers notwithstanding, the numerous succession disputes that the Elmina stool has suffered militate against the notion of a single dynastic family in Elmina.

Social Organization



The focus of this chapter is on social organization: demography, urbanization, architecture and the creation of an early Elmina diaspora inside and outside Africa on four continents. It discusses the core social institutions of *ebusua* (matriclan) and *asafo* (para-military organization) that bind society together. Finally, the chapter outlines the beginnings of Christian education in Elmina and discusses the interface of Christian principles and indigenous African thought and belief systems.

Demography and Urbanization

Elmina's population substantially increased between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries. Already, at the time of their arrival, the Portuguese described Elmina as a large settlement, which probably, in the context of the times, meant just several hundred inhabitants. In the succeeding three centuries following the Portuguese entry, Elmina became the largest coastal town on the Gold Coast. Both Feinberg (1989: 85) and Yarak (1990:48) estimate Elmina's population to have grown to between 12,000 and 16,000 by the eighteenth century, and the population continued to increase into the nineteenth century. A Dutch census of 1858 counted 3,350 houses and estimated the population to be between 18,000 and 20,000.

These figures are remarkable when compared to the sizes of the major colonial towns of the time in the Americas. For example, Port Royal (Jamaica), the biggest English port town in the Americas, had a population estimated at 6,500 to 10,000, while Williamsburg, Virginia, the capital of the American colonies, contained only 2,000 people on the eve of the Revolutionary War.

Located on a narrow rocky sandstone peninsula extending out between the Benya Lagoon and the Atlantic Ocean, the early small settlement had few streets, many narrow alleys and numerous cul-de-sacs and consisted of a small community. Today, the town of Elmina currently has a population estimated at 34,000 people.

Elmina's residential pattern comprised the castle, the peninsula area between the Benya Lagoon and the sea which was the site of the original settlement, the fish market, and the "new" settlement that arose after the British bombardment of the town in 1873.

By the eighteenth century, Elmina had expanded and become more heterogeneous as other Akan as well as non-Akan immigrants settled there. It had become not only a major trading center but also a melting pot of at least five distinct groups or communities, namely, the *Edinafo*, the Euro-Africans, Dutch officials, the Asante diaspora, and immigrants from neighbouring states.

The first group, the *Edinafo* or citizens of Elmina numbered some 10,000 to 12, 000 by the 19th century. They were mostly fisherfolk by profession, though some were engaged in trade while others worked as skilled artisans (Feinberg 1969, Yarak 1986).

The second community consisted of *tapoeyers*, offspring of Dutch men and *Edina* women, and their descendants. Their head was called *bugermeester*, a mayor of sorts. It was the *tapoeyers* who served as cultural and trade brokers between the *Edinafo* and Asante traders. The more successful of them acquired the title of *vriburger*, which afforded them the

protection of Dutch law though they were living in Elmina.

The third group comprised a small number of Dutch officials, about 20 in number. They were paid by the Netherlands government and tended to ally themselves with the Asantes.

The Asante diaspora in Elmina constituted the fourth community. Their number started to increase after the Asante campaigns of the coastal areas of the Gold Coast in the first two decades of the 19th century. Totalling as many as 1,000, they were headed by the Asante resident ambassador in Elmina. The group played the important role of smoothing relations between Elmina and Asante, especially in facilitating trade between the two states and assisting visiting Asante traders. Reciprocally, Edina and *vriburger* traders were given special privileges in Kumase (Wilks 1975: 48).

Right from the beginning of the nineteenth century, Asante kings were determined to protect Elmina from external attacks and threats because of the special affinity that existed between the two states. The sentiments expressed by Asantehene Osei Yaw Akoto (1824-34) to visiting *vriburger* emissary Jacob Simmons in 1832 captured the tight relations between the two states: "The Dutch and the Elminas are the only faithful allies I have . . . Be assured of my loyalty" (*Elmina Journal* 15 Feb., 1832).

The fifth and last group was made up of immigrants from neighbouring states, including people from Fetu, Eguafu, Akyem and Denkyira, refugees from Asante-Fante wars, and Ewe and Ga fishermen from the east. This is why the suburb of Bantoma to the west of Elmina has a large population of Ewe descent today.

With the influx of people from Europe as well as other parts of Ghana, ideas, products, lifestyles and other influences that these immigrants brought to Elmina and the wealth and affluence generated by the town's focal position in the trans-continental trade, Elmina emerged as the first cosmopolitan centre in West Africa. Indeed, it was this transformation that

gave the town the sobriquet *Aborekyir Kaakra*, that is, “Little Europe.”

The Edina state today comprises the town of Elmina, the capital, and a group of 26 adjoining villages within some 400 square miles comprising Simew, Kanka (Dutch Komenda), Ampenyi, Brenu Akyenmu, Esaaman, Ankwanda, Ataabadze, Bantoma, Sanka, Amoanda, Kofor, Iture, Bronyibema, Nkontrodo, Amisano, Abee, Ewusam, Atronkwa, Abena, Dwir Akyenmu, Ansadwer, Pehi, Tetarkesim, Mbofra Akyenmu, Ntraanoa and Ahomtsew. Collectively, they come under the local administrative district of Komenda-Edina-Eguafo-Abirem (KEEA). By the 1867 Anglo-Dutch agreement in connection with the exchange of forts, the Sweet (Dolce) River at Iture was accepted as demarcating the eastern boundary between Elmina and Cape Coast. The western border extended as far as Shama.

Architecture

While the earliest houses were built of timber and clay (wattle and daub), the town eventually had a large number of stone houses with European design, especially during the Dutch era (1637-1872). Eventually, with over 60 forts established along the 500 kilometer (310 mile) long coastline of the Gold Coast, “owned” variously by the Portuguese, Dutch, French, British and Scandinavians, the European population increased, although there was never more than a few hundred of any nationality on the entire coast at any one time. These individuals were government officials, traders and soldiers, who had no intention of permanently settling in the area.

Christopher DeCorse’s excavations at Elmina (1992:173) found that unlike other colonial ports, the local population at Elmina maintained their ritual practices, use of space, and foodways, including a preference for locally made pots over low-fired lead and tin-glazed European ceramics. Evidence also shows that the Europeans adapted to the local diet as a result of their dependence on local food resources and cooks.

As the town's population increased from the original hundreds to thousands, so did the number of houses. Barbot (1992 : 380) estimated that there were about 1,200 dwellings in the late seventeenth century while Baesjou (1979 : 214) placed the number of houses at 3,358 in 1859. Even though there is little information from the documentary sources on settlement organization, the available evidence such as the *dagregisters* (journals) of Holland's second West India Company point to a steady increase in population size.

Increasingly, European elements were incorporated into house construction in Elmina. A 1637 Dutch plan showed the houses to be in a regular, barrack-like arrangement whereas the British 1799 plan showed that construction design had moved in the direction of an angular, geometric pattern, an indication of the influence the Dutch had had on Elmina's architecture. Along with this development, we see the incorporation of gardens in house construction at this time. Already, we learn from Barbot's description (1992 : 380) that in the late seventeenth century, the garden at the residence of the Dutch Governor-General, which was at the base of Fort Jago, contained walkways that were "lined with orange and lemon trees, palms . . . and several other kinds of trees unknown in Europe". By the early nineteenth century, the houses of the wealthy typically incorporated gardens (DeCorse 2, 52). My own matrilineal home still bears the name Niezer's Garden, locally known as Akodaetrom

Demographically, by the 1700s, some houses were being built north of the Benya Lagoon, a development that expanded after the British bombardment of Elmina in 1873. At first they were clustered around the coastal road, later to be named Liverpool Street, and extended through High Street to Cemetery Road and Lime Street. Many of these, owned by wealthy Dutch or mulatto merchants, were impressive structures built of brick and stone.

There is no doubt that economic and occupational status influenced house construction. The wealthy and well-to-do

could afford to build ostentatious stone houses which were concentrated in the vicinity of the castle and the market. The less impressive homes in the fashion of huts were situated to the west. The evidence indicates that many of the residences of the wealthy contained servants and slaves as well.

Given that the most common form of local house construction feature on the West African coast was timber and clay ("wattle and daub"), the proliferation of stone residences was not only unique but also indicative of the growing affluence associated with the emergence of Elmina as a metropolitan centre. Willem Bosman confirmed this transformation. Elmina differed from other parts of the coast, he observed, in that "[T]he Houses [of Elmina] are built with Rock Stone" unlike other places where "they are only made of clay or loam intertwined with wood" (1967: 42-43).

Some of the eighteenth-century stone houses were quite impressive. That of Johan Niezer, for example, was three stories high, had a stairway that led all the way to the flat roof, windows made of shutters or stained glass, and exterior walls fitted with light fixtures. Like the homes of other rich residents, Niezer's house had door arches and verandahs. The adoption of stone construction was a European building technology that was appropriated during the Dutch period by Elmina masons and craftsmen, whereas the Portuguese regiments normally provided their own masons.

Another distinctive feature of house construction was their flat roofs, although it is not clear whether this was, like stone construction, a Dutch feature since flat roofs were traditionally known in northern Ghana and the sahel region.

The streets of Elmina today are conspicuously dotted with remnants of colonial architecture, along with *aposuban*, shrines of the various *asafo* companies, each with its own unique flags and statues. The distinctive yellow brick buildings that still stand in Elmina today bear testimony to the Dutch past.

The old Dutch cemetery was located just outside the castle and remained in use until Dutch Governor-General

J. P. Hoogenboom ordered the construction of a new *Dutch Cemetery* in 1806 in the part of Elmina then known as “The Garden” to the north of Jago Hill. The most prominent of the Dutch were buried in the middle of the cemetery. These included Governor Hoogenboom himself, Anthony van der Eb and C. H. Bartels. Also buried there are some notable citizens of Elmina such as Nana Kobina Gyan I, Chief Kweku Andoh and Dr. R. P. Baffour.

As part of the *Elmina 2015 Strategy*, sections of the Dutch Cemetery including the entrance underwent renovation in 2006. An inscription at the gate, which was also renovated, reads: “*O weldadige moeder, ontvang uwe kinderen weder*” (“Oh benevolent mother, receive your children once again.”) The renovation rededication ceremony in 2006 was overseen by the Dutch ambassador to Ghana Arie van der Wiel and KEEA Chief Executive George Frank Asmah.

In addition to the Dutch Cemetery, the resuscitation and preservation of historic structures that have fallen into disrepair or decay included the renovation of 15 buildings (see Chapter 12).

The Elmina Diaspora

In addition to individual sons and daughters of Elmina, groups of Elmina descendants achieved prominence in the Elmina diaspora. Here are some notable examples:

Distinguished sons and daughters of Elmina constituted an elite group in Holland, the Netherlands Antilles, Suriname and Java in Indonesia. They were the descendants of enslaved citizens of Elmina and its hinterland who were taken to plantations in Suriname or the Netherlands Antilles, or African soldiers enlisted from Elmina to serve in the Dutch army in the East Indies.

Plantation slavery was a life of horror and inhumanities. However, throughout the centuries of European slavery in the Americas, the enslaved Africans resisted. Their sustained fight to liberate themselves in myriad ways has been well

documented. One aspect of this resistance found expression in what is known as Maroon societies. Maroons were individuals and groups who, rather than fighting their condition inside the plantation system, escaped from the confines of the plantations to establish their own independent communities in areas largely inaccessible to the colonial forces. Nowhere was this Maroon paradigm in the creation of independent, self-sustaining societies by runaway slaves more successful than in Suriname and Jamaica where some of the communities have survived to the present day. Even though the records tended to lump them all together as Akan people without distinction, many of these escaped slaves were known to have been taken from Elmina Castle and its hinterland, along with Cape Coast Castle and Fort Amsterdam.

In Jamaica, the Maroons became a distinct group of African ex-slaves renowned for their ferocity and military skills. One group, led by Cudjoe, established a Maroon community in the Cockpit Mountains in 1685 called Cudjoe's Town, later to be renamed Trelawny Town. Another founded the town of Accompong. Jamaican Maroon resistance was so troublesome to the colonial authorities for a long time that eventually expediency led a desperate government to sue for peace with Maroon leaders Cudjoe and Quao in 1739. The agreement that the leaders signed gave the Maroons some degree of local autonomy and enabled them to keep alive their heritage and traditions.

Central to the perpetuation of themselves as a distinct group to the present day is the way in which the Maroons employed Akan values. They appropriated and recreated Akan institutions and systems of naming, initiation, leadership, warfare, and worldview, which became symbols not only in the forging of a unique identity but also essential mechanisms in their survival (Adjaye 1994). Names of leaders such as Cudjoe and Quao and towns like Accompong bear testimony to the retention of "Akanisms". And although the Jamaican Maroons were a mixed group of predominantly

Akan origins, they included slave descendants from Elmina and its vicinity.

Emigrants from Elmina were also the backbone of the fishing industry along the West African coast—from Liberia to The Gambia and Senegal in the west, and Benin (Dahomey) and Biafra (Nigeria) in the east. In Benin, the Elmina émigré fishermen intermarried and their offspring were the ones who became known as the Mina people.

Ebusua

People of Elmina and all Akan societies belong to a socio-cultural organization called *ebusua* (Fante), *abusua* (Twi). An *ebusua* is composed of numerous extended families (*fie*, singular; *mfie*, plural). Within the *ebusua* clan, property and debts are considered as communal or collective matters. Even though women in the *ebusua* can rise to prominence, the head of the family, known as Ebusua Panyin, notwithstanding the matrilineal character of the institution, is nearly always a male elder, who is assisted by a council of elders (*mpanyinfo*). Marriage is regarded as a union not only between individuals, but more so, as between two families, and the ability to beget children is considered of paramount importance because children ensured the continuity of the lineage.

As elsewhere among the Akan, the *ebusua*, which is distinguished by extended exogamous matrilineal clans, has throughout history served as a unifying factor. It is the locus of identity and the determinant of inheritance and accession to office. However, the *ebusua*'s matrilineal nature is counterbalanced by *ntoro*, the spiritual characteristics that are genetically derived patrilineally. The internal social systems that Elmina shared with other Akan groups—*ebusua*'s matrilineage, the patrilineage of the asafo institution (described below)—combined with intermarriage to provide social cohesion.

The four principal Elmina clans are Nsona, Anona, Twedan and Ebiradze. In the past, there were other clans some of

which have now become extinct. Each clan is distinguished by a totem such as an animal that is associated with certain characteristics. In addition to providing social solidarity, clans undertake communal obligations during funerals activities.

Asafo

In addition to the *ebusua*, the second fundamental social institution is the *asafo*. Asafo are traditional para-military groups that continue to exist in several Akan states today. The word derives from the Akan “*sa*”, meaning war and “*fo*”, meaning people. Thus *asafo* can be translated as “war people”. Hence, the fundamental function of all *asafo* companies traditionally was the military defence of the state. As a result of the European contact, Elmina developed an especially complex *asafo* system in terms of sociopolitical organization, with highly elaborate traditions based on flags, figurative scenes, and martial arts. Each *asafo* company is distinguished by its exclusive colours and uniform.

Though the origins of the Elmina *asafo* companies are unclear, Dutch records indicate that they were in existence at least by the seventeenth century. The omission of a description of the *asafo* companies in Willem Bosman’s *A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea* (1703) led Harvey Feinberg to conclude that the organization might not have been that important at the beginning of the European contact. However, by 1724 the core seven *asafo* companies were firmly established. Indeed, by the early eighteenth century their importance in Elmina society had evidently been recognized by the Dutch who sought their help in 1724 in fighting off John Canoe, a local powerful merchant prince who was attacking European fortifications in Axim in southwestern Gold Coast. Also by that time, a residential pattern had developed by which the original seven *asafo* companies were known to be occupying specific wards in the town (Feinberg 1989:105).

The original seven *asafo* companies were:

- No. 1 Ankobea.
- No. 2 Akyemfo.
- No. 3 Akyem-Nkodwo.
- No. 4 Wombir.
- No. 5 Abese / Abesi.
- No. 6 Noboafa.
- No. 7 Nyampa.

Three additional companies were created in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the last being the mulatto-based Akrampafo.

- No. 8 Brofomba (mostly refugees from Fante wars).
- No. 9 Alatabamfo (mostly descendants of West India Company slaves).
- No. 10 Akrampafo (formed by Dutch freeburghers *vrijburgers*).

In a hierarchical system, each *asafo* is headed by a *supi* under whom are several *asafohenfo* and a number of subordinate officers including a standard bearer, *kyerɛma* (drummer), bugler or fiddleman, *asafo kɔmfo* (diviner), and *abrafo* (executioners). Among the indispensable war paraphernalia of all the *asafo* companies are the *batakari* (war cloak) and *bodua* (whip made of horse tail). The entire *asafo* organization is headed by a *Tufohen*.

In contrast to the *ebusua*, which is matrilineal, membership of the *asafo* has always been patrilineal. Boys joined their fathers' *asafo* groups, lived with them in their wards, and received military training and civic education as they grew up. In general, however, Euro-African boys could not join these associations as their fathers lacked membership. It was this deprivation that led a small group of mulattoes to establish their own ward in the vicinity of the castle in the 1780s, a move that eventually led to the creation of the *Akrampafo Asafo Company*.

Elements of the *asafo* organization clearly depict European influences that were infused during the period of the Portuguese, Dutch and English contact—flags, guns, uniforms, imagery such as airplanes and warships, and the para-military structure of the organization itself.

The *asafo* organization in some respects bears some resemblance to the Asante *mmrantee* (young men) who have an egalitarian voice, as commoners, through which they express concerns that affect them or their communities. Each *asafo* has its own exclusive shrine (*posuban*). In Elmina more so than in other Akan societies, the *asafo* occupied and performed distinct roles in the political life of the state. This included, as stated in chapter 7, the installment of a king, which was the prerogative of the No. 7 Nyampa Company, and the celebration of Bakatue (see Chapter 10) and Edina Bronya festivals. By the nineteenth century an outgrowth of the *asafo* had developed in the *basonfo*, a council of wealthy citizens which counterbalanced other institutions of power.

The *Tufohen*, the overall head of all the *asafo* companies, and the *Supi* and *Safohen*, the heads of the individual companies, received allowances from the Dutch, an indication of their recognition by the Dutch.

The *asafo* organization initially grew out of the needs of civil defence. During wartimes, each of the companies had responsibility for the defence of a strategic part of Elmina as follows:

Ankobeia (No. 1): Amoana Sermu.

Akyemfo (No. 2): Cape Coast Road.

Nkodwofo (No. 3): left flank of Akyemfo, i.e., Abena Sermu.

Wombir (No. 4): Abaka Powmu.

Abese (No. 5) and Nobofo (No. 6): Tetermu.

Nyampafo (No. 7): Bando.

Brofonkoa (No. 8): Korkorano.

Alatabamfo (No. 9): Bronyibema.

Akrampafo (No. 10): assigned to whatever else needed to be guarded in Elmina.

In time, the *asafo*'s civic responsibilities expanded to incorporate other tasks such as sanitation, road construction and maintenance, policing duties and search for missing persons.

Missionary Education

The Portuguese began evangelizing by opening a Christian primary school in the castle. However, the Portuguese early attempts at the introduction of Western systems of education did not take roots even though it is known that a few local individuals were taken to Europe to be educated. Later, they built St. George's Church on what is now St. Jago's Hill, the first known Christian church in sub-Saharan Africa outside Ethiopia. In 1529 King John III of Portugal ordered the establishment of a school in the Elmina community. It taught reading, writing and the Bible.

Overall, however, the early efforts at conversion including the work of Augustinian monks in the 1570s and Franciscan friars subsequently were largely ineffectual. After the unsuccessful Dutch attack of 1595 on Elmina Castle, the Portuguese decided that their little chapel on St Jago's Hill was no longer safe, and so in the following year they built a replacement inside the walls of St George's Castle and left the old chapel to decay.

After the Dutch take-over of 1637, they built their own Protestant chapel inside the castle. The Dutch also paid attention to education. Jacobus Capitein (see Chapter 9), who received a distinguished education in Holland, ran a school located in the castle from 1740 until his death in 1745. By that time it had a sizeable enrollment of over 400 boys and girls. The Dutch also established a school for the education of the Akrampafo (Euro-African children) and an industrial centre inside the castle.

In general, however, formal schooling did not take firm roots until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries when European-based education was popularized largely through the efforts of Wesleyan and Catholic missionaries. In 1840, evangelists from the Methodist Missionary Society reached Elmina from Cape Coast where they had begun Bible work five years earlier. One of the Elmina citizens who worked in the vanguard of this effort was Mrs. Amelia Bartels, popularly known as Ewuraba Etsiapa. As with local negative reaction to missionary work in Asante at the time (Adjaye 1996: 158-59), the posture of the Edina State was initially not supportive, even though the Dutch Reformed Church proceeded to open a school for “natives” as opposed to the Castle School for mulattoes, from whom several of the best students, including Carl Bartels, J. Simons, J. Rhule, H. Villars and C. Neizer, were sent to Holland for higher education.

Others gained prominence locally by virtue of their educational excellence and proficiency in Dutch and English. Such were men of the like of Henry Plange who served simultaneously as Dutch emissary to Asante and the Asantehene’s letter-writer while he was in Kumase, and Hendrik Vroom who held several key appointments in the British administration including that of District Commissioner (Adjaye 1996: 166-71).

Following the 1872 “transfer of flag,” education continued to grow in the limited ways that it had experienced for several centuries. This time, however, English superseded Dutch as the medium of instruction. In general, education was still more literary than vocational and technical; for a long time the primary goal of colonial education was to provide Africans with limited facilities that would enable them to occupy clerical and other low positions in the administrative structure, rather than giving students advanced training.

Following the failure of early Portuguese attempts at evangelization, Catholicism was not reintroduced to the Gold Coast until 1880 in Elmina, led by Fathers A. Moreau

and E. Murat. The Catholic mission opened a primary school and a girls' convent. In 1930 a Teacher Training College, St. Augustine's, and a seminary were opened at Amissano. My late father, Robert E.K. Adjaye, was one of the 35 pioneers of St. Augustine's College.

Akan Worldview

Who am I? What is my purpose in this life? And what happens when I pass? What constitutes my humanity? How do I relate to other humans and the universe? How do I rationalize or comprehend the evidently incomprehensible things around me? Confronted by these issues and similar difficult questions, the people of Elmina developed a philosophy of life that they share with other Akan dwellers of coastal and central Ghana and parts of La Côte d'Ivoire—a philosophy that transcends religion to encompass metaphysics, ethics, cosmological principles, morality, epistemology and a conception of personhood. It represents a holistic and all-pervasive system of interrelated principles. It is not just a complete conceptual system; more importantly, it is also a way of life.

Thus, *edinafo* (citizens of Elmina) share common responses and systems with other Akan peoples when it comes to belief and thought practices. They recognize a Supreme Being whom they call *Nyame* and who is believed to be intimately involved in every aspect of human life. They have a deep faith in his ability to cut a path for them through every difficult situation. *Nyame*, the Supreme Being, translates as the one who satisfies. He is alternatively referred to as *Nyankopɔn*, that is, the unique, great one, or *Twerduapɔn*, the great dependable one. In sum, *Nyame* has the attributes of omnipotence, omnipresence, and omniscience.

At the apex of a hierarchy of interconnected forces sits the Supreme Being, below whom are deities, then ancestors, and finally, humans. Particular deities are associated with the state, clans or families. Natural features such as lakes, rivers, mountains and forests are also believed to be the abodes

of certain deities. Elmina is reputed to have seventy-seven deities. Deities can be benevolent or malevolent. Therefore it requires the intervention of specialists known as diviners who are considered to have the ability to communicate with these deities through libations and ritual offerings to transform the lives of supplicants through their intercession. *Asaase Efua* (Mother Earth) deity, is the embodiment of fertility.

Personhood consists of both physical and spiritual elements. And so when a person passes, it is only the physical part that disintegrates; the spiritual component traverses to a higher realm and transforms into an ancestor, if they achieved a great life on earth. As erstwhile members of the family or community, these ancestors are considered to maintain constant contact with their earthly kin and can be similarly invoked through libations for good or evil. This belief in a pantheon of invisible spirits in the universe is central to all indigenous thought systems. It is because the Supreme Being and divinities are so distant from humans that the living has to communicate with them through the intermediary of diviners, elders and other specialists. Some specialists seek to communicate with, or manipulate, the spirit world through prayers and protective amulets and charms. Thus, within the Akan cosmos, diviners function to connect the two interpenetrating and inseparable parts of the spirit world and human world together, for in this primal belief and thought system, every happening or occurrence in life is given a religious attribution or interpretation.

At the individual level, the concept of life, known to the Akan as *nkwa*, embodies long life, good health, vitality, prosperity, peace and tranquillity. Therefore when it is believed that an invisible force is militating against the full achievement of life, again, diviners can be approached to intervene to eliminate such a malicious force. At the societal level, cosmic balance and equilibrium are maintained through preventive, protective and purification rites, again performed by specialists. In a world in which the physical and spiritual

are closely intertwined, the unseen is as real as that which is seen.

These philosophical and religious principles have practical implications for everyday life. They function to support a communal social structure, underlie a common humanity, underpin moral equality, and foster cooperation and social responsibility. Above all, the philosophical tenets represent peoples' attempt to resolve questions of identity, morality, cosmic balance and a way of life that has evolved as rational and practical responses to the challenges and exigencies of survival under harsh conditions and difficult environments.

It is this resilient system that the European proselytizers encountered in Elmina and elsewhere in Africa. It is a system that is lived on a daily basis as part of people's everyday lives rather than practised in specified places of worship on certain days and at particular times. It has no liturgy or catechism. You are born into it and you imbibe it as you grow. When European evangelists at first did not see in Africa churches of worship, they branded Africans as heathens or pagans. This derogatory attitude and its accompanying denigration of traditional African practices, which they misunderstood, did not win them African followers from the onset of European attempts at conversion in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. When the evangelists returned in the nineteenth century, this time with a more sustained effort, they achieved more success. But it was because Africans by and large realized that some elements of Christianity were compatible with aspects of indigenous African belief and thought systems—belief in a Supreme Being, the ability of intermediaries to communicate with otiose superior forces, and an after-life, for example. Thus what the early converts did was to accept Christianity while retaining aspects of traditional religious practices that they recognized as essential elements of their Africanity in a system of co-existence. Yet Christianity's rejection of African names, cultural practices associated with birth, marriage and death, and other traditional observances in favour of those of

the West continued to considerably constrain proselytization efforts in Ghana until the rise of fundamentalism in the 1980s.

Nana Ntona

A statue of St. Anthony of Padua that was initially made for a Catholic church in Portugal was later brought to Elmina by Portuguese missionaries in the 17th century. Subsequently, when the Dutch drove away the missionaries the statute somehow ended up in a local shrine as a deity named Nana Ntona. It quickly acquired a great reputation for healing powers and miraculous deeds. It became a refuge for runaway slaves and was said to be a protector of locals in dire circumstances. Today, Nana Ntona is considered one of the 77 deities of Elmina. The transcultural appropriation and manipulation of St. Anthony is one more illustration of the interconnection between Western religion and iconography, on the one hand, and African belief systems and practices, on the other.

Social Change

The major economic activities that existed in the pre-European era remained active throughout the period of the European contact, but they underwent substantial changes. Indigenous subsistence strategies, the crops cultivated and fishing technology all were impacted by European influences as were ceramics, metalwork, bead production, and ivory carving. Trade expansion, which afforded greater access to European imports, facilitated industrial innovation. Marine fishing in particular took advantage of new resources and techniques.

The European contact also impacted consumption patterns and local diets. New crops and domesticated animals were introduced from the Americas, Asia and other parts of Africa. The most common of these were some species of beans, breadfruit, cherry tomatoes, corn, coffee, cocoa, coconuts, cassava, cashew, mangoes, oranges, peanuts, pineapples,

sugar cane and sweet potatoes. Bread-making and bread consumption were also adopted.

There was an elaboration of crafts and craft specialization as well as an infusion of distinctive stylistic types. Craftsmen employed the lost wax (*cire perdue*) method to produce more elaborate gold and brass ornaments. In metalwork, a variety of objects were made by bending or molding imported copper or copper alloy. Bantoma, a western suburb of Elmina, became recognized for its gold ornaments. Bead work, which is one of the earliest craft traditions in Elmina, similarly saw modifications spurred on by European influences, especially using imported glass beads.

As has been demonstrated above, our social institutions of *ebusua* and *asafo* have been the bedrock of society over the centuries and remained resilient in the face of the penetration of Western influences. The African worldview has equally maintained its integrative capacity and continuities.

Inter-racial Marriages and the Rise of Euro-Africans in Elmina



This chapter discusses the issue of inter-racial marriages and the emergence of biracial offspring often called mulattoes. It outlines the careers of some of these who became distinguished in various spheres of life. However, even though these Euro-Africans were visible in social standing and enjoyed an elite status, no common identity based on skin colour or mixed descent developed in Elmina society. Thus, they did not form a separate community somewhat apart from the indigenous society.

The records provide fairly precise information about the sizes of the European population. Only 63 of the hundreds of Portuguese who accompanied d'Azambuja remained. The number remained small throughout the Portuguese period, often in the 30s. The senior officials such as commanders may have been of high standing socially, but the vast majority of the Portuguese who manned the garrison were of lower class and even included *degredados* (convicts) and others of uncertain backgrounds.

With the Dutch, as Elmina's importance as a trading centre increased, so did the number of Dutch officials. Records indicate that during the seventeenth century the number of Dutch officials at Elmina Castle regularly exceeded 100. By the eighteenth century their number was averaging 175. They included administrators, sailors and soldiers.

The number of females among the European population

was always noticeably small. A Portuguese record of 1529 listed only four women who served as cooks and nurses and additionally provided sexual services for a fee. Given the small number of European women, the garrison officials regularly relied on local women for domestic service and marital relations. Their offspring whom the Dutch called *tapoeyers*, mulattoes, were a distinct component of Elmina society. They typically dressed more conspicuously.

There were formal marriages between Dutch men and Elmina women, as well as common law relations. A special school was set up for the education of mulatto children in the arts, economics, crafts and horticulture. Feinberg estimated that Euro-Africans of Dutch descent in the entire Gold Coast in the eighteenth century may have numbered only about 500, roughly two-thirds of whom were born in Elmina (89). Many of these mulattoes were employed by the European trading companies. Some eventually became successful independent merchants. A good example was one Jan Niezer who travelled to Europe several times and is reputed to have been the first merchant from Elmina to order goods directly from Europe and America. He was highly regarded and was often called upon to settle local disputes (see below). Some mulattoes acquired special status. The Dutch called them *vrijburgers*, which equated with “free citizens” or “free people”. They were the group that formed their own *asafo* company known as the Akrampafo.

Many Portuguese men and Dutch West India Company workers entered into relationships with local women. Their offspring—albeit a small group—came to form an integral part of the local population. Yet, as pointed out above, these biracial Euro-Africans, commonly identified as mulattoes (and *tapoeyers* by the Dutch) in Elmina, did not constitute a separate racial group from the indigenous society as occurred with some Luso-Africans in parts of the Upper Guinea Coast. In consequence, they did not develop a communal identity (Everts 81; Lever 253).

Nonetheless, there were social differences among these Euro-Africans as they occupied different positions and roles in society. Some became part of the emergent new class of wealthy traders that took advantage of the trans-Atlantic commercial opportunities that opened up with the European entry into the Gold Coast and the establishment of the plantation system in the Americas. A case in point is, again, the mulatto slave trader Jan Niezer. Niezer was sent by his father, a Prussian surgeon in the service of the West India Company (WIC), to be educated in Europe at an early age. Upon returning to the Gold Coast around 1770, he, like his father, entered the service of the WIC.

Most, however, because of their lack of education, were at best employed in minor positions as soldiers and middlemen in the trade transactions. Even though prominent mulattoes like Jan Niezer were an integral part of Elmina society, they were never a group who, by their numbers and cultural cohesiveness, could be said to have constituted a distinctive social class, notwithstanding the fact that from the eighteenth century on, there seemed to have developed a greater degree of identification among them.

The main reason, as Feinberg concluded in his study of Elmina's multi-ethnic society, was the strength and resiliency of the indigenous culture. Because of the Akan matrilineal system, children of mixed marriages were absorbed and incorporated into their mother's *ebusua* (matriclan). Thus, as Everts confirms, lineage affiliation militated against the development of a distinct social category of Euro-Africans. However, Feinberg nonetheless noted (92) that a small mulatto ward was formed in Elmina by a small group of men in the 1780s. Further, very few Europeans were rich enough to bequeath substantial sums of money or a slave to their mulatto children upon their death or send them to Europe for education.

Yet, to facilitate relations between the European resident community and the indigenous Elmina population, binding

regulations were drawn up known as “*pennen*” and “*contracten*,” which were periodically reviewed and ratified by the Dutch governor. These regulations were sworn to by both the Dutch authorities and Edina chiefs. The “*pennen*” and “*contracten*” included stipulations regulating inter-racial marriages or “*calisaren*” as they were known in Dutch. For the most part the “*calisaren*” were compatible with African customary law. In all cases, however, the status of the indigenous mother—free or unfree—was a primary factor in determining the position that the mulatto offspring occupied in the castle or larger community.

Inter-racial Marriages

Local women who married European men acquired some advantages such as easier access to imported goods which commonly extended to other kin. Their husbands might build houses on their wives’ family land and when they passed or returned to Europe, they typically left their property to their wives and children.

Other opportunities existed that fostered beneficial relations between the local community and the Dutch West India Company. Local boys could seek menial jobs at the castle as valets and girls as washerwomen and cooks, while elders of mixed marriages could offer their biracial boys to the Company for enlistment as soldiers. The more enterprising men could serve as agents or *makelaars* (brokers) in trading activities for the Dutch, thereby developing the skills and connections that could eventually make them independent traders.

Some Distinguished Citizens of Elmina

A number of Elmina citizens, most but not all of whom were offspring of mixed marriages, gained distinction in various spheres of life. Here, an attempt is made to highlight some of these. Space limitations, however, would not permit us to do justice to all of them or even the full careers of those selected.

George E. Emisang: During the Anglo-Dutch transfer of possessions, an Elmina native, George Emil Emisang, the first Western educated lawyer in the Gold Coast and an authority on Gold Coast aboriginal law, facilitated the transaction. He was later appointed a Commander in the British administration.

Pedro A. Nino: Christopher Columbus is known to have taken four local highly skilled sailors from the Elmina area back to Andalusia (Spain). They were subsequently to accompany and assist him on his trans-Atlantic voyages. One of them, who went on to achieve great prominence, was Pedro Alonso Nino, who later led a sailing expedition to Venezuela.

Isabelita Hermonia: Another native of Elmina who was known as Isabelita Hermonia (1632-92), was the first person from the Gold Coast to achieve international distinction as an artist. At the age of 10 she was taken to Spain where she studied and mastered Flemish and Gothic painting and amassed a reputation that spread all over Europe.

Johannes Huydecoper: Johannes Jacobus Cornelius Huydecoper, a Euro-African, served as clerk in the Dutch administration. He later became a merchant of considerable distinction. Both his father, Willem (1788-1826), and son, Jacob (1811-45), served as Dutch envoys to Asante (Adjaye 1996: 86-87, 146-47).

Jacob Abraham de Veer (1838-1926), grandson of a Dutch Governor-General, was a wealthy merchant who also served at some point as Dutch consul and burgomaster in Elmina.

J.W. Ephson: Another citizen of Elmina, J. W. Ephson, ran a successful economic empire in the 1880s and 1890s.

Jan Kooi: The first African to be awarded the highest military honor (Militaire Willermssorde) in the Dutch military for his courage and extraordinary service in the Aceh/ Atjeh (Indonesian) war (1873-1904), Jan Kooi was born in Elmina in 1849 and entered the war in 1869 at the age of 20. His original name is unclear. His mother's name is given as "Essowa" and his father's was corrupted into "Dinaba."

Jan Niezer: Mention has been made earlier in this chapter of the fact that influential mulattoes such as Jan Niezer could gain education in Europe and flourish as brokers between Europeans and locals upon their return. Here an attempt is made to shed more light on Jan Niezer, perhaps the most influential Gold Coast mulatto during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and a man who maximized his Dutch as well as local connections to the fullest.

Born in Elmina to a German medical assistant in the service of the Dutch West India Company (WIC) and a local woman, Niezer was educated in Europe before returning to the Gold Coast around 1770. Like his father, Jan Niezer also joined the WIC, serving as a soldier and subsequently an administrator. After some 16 years with the WIC, Niezer returned in 1785 to Europe where he gained employment with one of the largest Dutch trading houses of the time and a major player in the slave trade.

Back in the Gold Coast, Niezer established himself as an independent trader, attempting to break the WIC's trade monopoly. When the Dutch East India Company was finally dissolved in 1791, Niezer took the opportunity to become the biggest private trader on the Gold Coast.

In 1793, Jan Niezer moved to Accra to take advantage of the slave trade being conducted out of the Dutch Fort Crevecoer, the British Fort James and the Danish Fort Christiansborg. By the early nineteenth century, Niezer was said to be supplying some 500 slaves per year at a time when the slave trade had now been outlawed. His continued involvement in the slave trade angered the British Commander who ordered the seizure of his properties. When war broke out between Accra and Akwapem, and Niezer was accused of harbouring a wanted refugee named Apho, an angry mob burned his house and plundered his property.

Later, when Asante-Fante war broke out in 1806, Jan Niezer left Accra for Elmina, confident that with an Asante victory, the Elmina-Asante trade route would be re-opened.

Before leaving Accra, he appointed one of his sons to act as his trade agent. During the war, Niezer supplied Elmina with weapons and ammunition worth 11,000 Dutch guilders, and also led a battle group of around 200 men against the Fante. Elmina successfully withstood the attack and was eventually liberated by an Asante contingent.

In 1818, Jan Niezer was arrested by Dutch Governor-General Herman Daendels on a charge of inciting the king of Elmina to kill him. When Daendels died soon thereafter, Niezer was offered the opportunity to defend himself in the Netherlands, which he gladly accepted. He was tried and acquitted of all wrongdoing. Following his acquittal, Niezer returned to the Gold Coast in 1819.

Not much is known about Niezer's last years. In the meantime, his sons had sold or squandered much of his property. He became bankrupt and new economic ventures he undertook such as establishing a cotton plantation just outside Elmina were unsuccessful. Jan Niezer died in Elmina in 1822 at the age of 66 years.

Jacobus E. J. Capitein (ca. 1717-47)

The short but eventful life of the Elmina ex-slave Jacobus Capitein is one of the most intriguing of the eighteenth century. Although his original name is unknown, according to his own account, he was born around 1717 in Elmina, kidnapped from his parents at the age of eight and sold to a Dutch captain named Arnold Steenhard, who in turn gave him as a gift to his friend and fellow Dutch merchant Jacob van Gogh. Capitein stayed with van Gogh in Elmina Castle for two years before both sailed to Holland in 1728.

Once Capitein entered the Netherlands, he gained his freedom because slavery had been outlawed there at the time. With the support of his master, Capitein learned Dutch, studied catechism, and was baptized in the Dutch Reformed Church in The Hague. A prodigious student, Capitein pursued higher education in theology at the prestigious University of

Leiden in 1737. He excelled in the classics, reading, writing, and mathematics. In 1742, he defended his dissertation, *De servitute, libertati christianae non contraria* ("servitude is not in conflict with Christian liberty"), a controversial study in which he asserted that slavery and Christian liberty were compatible. His position that a slave who became Christian did not need to be freed gave him widespread notoriety which brought him numerous invitations to preach in churches around Holland. Indeed, his defence of slavery in particular made him popular with the Dutch East India Company which appointed him a minister for Elmina Castle in 1742.

Arriving in Elmina soon thereafter, Capitein had a short and chequered career. He was discriminated against by the white slave traders; his contacts with his fellow citizens of Elmina proved difficult because Capitein had apparently become too Dutch; and his efforts to baptize locals floundered. To ingratiate himself with the residents, Capitein proposed to marry a local girl, but his church did not approve of his marrying a "heathen" and instead married him to a Dutch woman called Antonia Ginderdros in 1745.

Even though his missionary efforts were largely unsuccessful, Capitein had better luck with his educational work in his short, five-year span in Elmina before his death in 1747. He ran a school for Euro-African children at the castle and also opened an orphanage. At its height, the school had about forty-five children, which, at a time, included 14 sons and daughters of Asantehene Opoku Ware I. The Asante King had sent them to Elmina with the request that they be educated in Holland as a token of Asante-Dutch friendship, but the WIC Director-General objected and instead enrolled them in Capitein's Castle School. However, it is known that one of the Asantehene's sons, Gyekye, was sent as an emissary with gifts to the Dutch monarch.

Jacobus Capitein's ambivalence toward, and accommodation of, slavery have to be understood in the context of the times. Even though he did not experience the horrors of plan-

tation slavery like the Igbo ex-slave Olaudah Equiano who later fought against the institution, he was not oblivious to the benefits he enjoyed from his Christian upbringing in Europe. His thinking on slavery was in fact in consonance with the dominant views of his times that recognized the centrality of slavery in the Dutch Republic's powerful economy. He was more interested in encouraging the baptism of Africans than with the inhumanities of the slavery institution. Be this as it may, Capitein was the first Black Minister of the Dutch Reformed Church and one of the first sub-Saharan Africans to study in a European university. His educational legacy included his translation of "The Lord's Prayer" and the "Ten Commandments" into Fante. These publications are among the first written works in Ghana.

Corporal Manus Ulzen (1812-1887)

In 1832, a 20-year old Manus Ulzen enlisted with the Dutch administration in Elmina to fight in its colonial army in the Dutch East Indies. The Dutch were engaged in a campaign to expand their colonial control from Java to Sumatra.

Upon his return, Ulzen and others who followed in his wake as Java ex-servicemen were to impact Elmina history tremendously. I am particularly interested in this story as well as the larger history of Elmina because I am a great-grandson of Manus Ulzen. My mother was Elizabeth Ulzen, daughter of Patrick Manus Ulzen who was one of the four sons of Corporal Manus Ulzen.

On 14 March 1832, Ulzen boarded the Dutch brig Clara Henrietta en route to Batavia (today Jakarta), capital of the Dutch East Indies, having demanded and been accorded the rank of corporal.

Manus Ulzen and his progeny were no strangers to the Dutch administration. He himself was a mulatto (*tapoeyer*), an offspring of Dutch and African descent. His parents were Roelof Ulsen and a Fante whose name was given as Abena Atta. Roelof had arrived in Elmina in 1731, at the age of about

ten, with his father Jan Ulsen, both of whom were to serve in the Dutch West India Company, in which Roelof eventually rose to the position of acting governor from 1755 to 1758. His mulatto son Hermanus similarly entered the service of the Dutch West India Company.

Manus Ulzen probably did not go to school, for he marked his name with a cross on most documents he was required to sign. However, he is known to have travelled to Holland, spoken some rudimentary Dutch, and like his fellow mulattoes, carried himself with some degree of elegance.

Despite Dutch Governor F. Last's vigorous campaign to recruit a target of 150 Africans to supplement the Dutch forces in the East Indies, only six others sailed with Manus Ulzen. As part of their enlistment packages, they were to receive incentives which included three months' advance pay and one *romaal* (a piece of cloth), and were also entitled to a pension and other inducements after completing their six-year Java contracts.

After sailing for 172 long days, the *Clara Henrietta* reached Batavia on 13 June 1813. During the voyage, Ulzen who had a smattering of Dutch, acted as interpreter. To fight boredom, Ulzen and his compatriots played music on the instruments that they took with them and enjoyed *oware* and other local games.

Upon arrival in Batavia, the seven first underwent training for new recruits. During the entire three and a-half-year period that he was in the East Indies, Ulzen consistently remitted two guilders, subsequently increased to three, out of his pay to his mother every month. The seven from Elmina, together with other Africans numbering 44 in all, were reported by the army commander to have served to his full satisfaction in the campaigns in Sumatra. Their moral and intellectual character was also said to have been good. Several incidents that occurred indicated that they also showed strong bonds of solidarity among themselves.

Sometime in mid-1834, Corporal Ulzen was injured in

combat and, by an official decree of July 24, was discharged from the army with a pension of 142 guilders per annum, and ordered to be repatriated, thus becoming one of the first Africans to be pensioned.

In consequence, Ulzen left Batavia on 27 August 1835 on the *Schoon Verbond*. His return, however, was a long, arduous and adventurous journey. The schooner sailed via the Cape of Good Hope past Elmina, arriving in Texel, the base of the colonial troops in the Netherlands, in mid-winter, on 4 December 1835. Instructions from his superiors were that Ulzen should be healed of his injuries and well treated so that he would give a favourable impression upon his return to enable the recruitment of Africans to continue. He was later sent to Utrecht to receive further treatment for his injured leg and was unable to travel for a while. In the mean time Ulzen demanded and received a bronze medal he had been promised in Batavia for his short but gallant service. On 15 March 1837, Corporal Ulzen finally arrived in Axim on the *Jonge Adriana* and proceeded to Elmina on the 19th. Instructions from the Department of Colonies stated that Manus Ulzen was to receive a lifetime pension of Dfl. 142 per annum. This was comparably handsome because his relative, Sergeant-Major Hendrik Ulzen, possibly a brother or cousin, retired from a military career of 25 years' service with the permanent force at St. George in a higher rank with a pension of only 108 guilders a year.

Corporal Ulzen was not the first Java veteran to return to Elmina. Of the first batch of 44 recruits, 17, including John Gober and Kudjo Akutsa, also came back home. The success of Manus Ulzen's Java campaign led the Dutch government to renew its recruitment efforts. Towards this end, a special envoy, Major-General Jan Verveer, was dispatched to Kumasi. On 18 March 1837, Jan Verveer signed a treaty between King Willem I and the Asantehene Kwaku Dua, under which the Asante king agreed to deliver 1,000 recruits in exchange for payment in guns and gunpowder. Recruitment was also undertaken along the coast.

The return of Corporal Ulzen and other Java veterans to Elmina was used by the Dutch to counter Britain's accusation that the scheme was a veiled form of slavery. There is evidence that the vets were generally proud of their service and took every opportunity to show off their medals and uniforms.

The number of Java veterans increased from three in 1837 to 40 pensioners by 1850. Even though Manus Ulzen was only 25 at the time of his return, he did not engage in any military service or full-time employment thereafter, perhaps because of his leg injury. The only exception was a five-week period in 1868 when he was part of a Dutch force employed to quell resistance that had erupted in Komenda over the deal to exchange forts between the British and the Dutch.

Returning Java veterans were allocated plots of land on a hill behind the castle that soon became known as Java Hill. Most of these returnees originally came from places in the hinterland that they were not sure of and so preferred to stay in Java Hill. Besides, living in Elmina would ensure easy access to their pensions from the Dutch authorities. Ulzen, however, being a citizen of Elmina, at first lived with his relatives before he was granted a plot on Heerenweg, now Liverpool Street, in 1846.

Manus Ulzen subsequently ran into some bad fortune. In 1851 his house caught on fire. A few years later, Ulzen and another Java veteran, Jan Pot, were charged with falsely accusing the influential Jan Niezer of pocketing the pension payments of other veterans. Ulzen was found guilty, fined and sentenced to three months' imprisonment.

Later in life, Manus Ulzen seemed to have taken up a position with the Dutch as a commissioner of sorts, regularly signing off on death certificates. He had by then become the leader and spokesman for the Java veterans and a man of considerable influence, respect and authority among the *vrijburgers* (Baesjou (1979: 180), regularly speaking on their behalf and especially during the difficult transition phase from Dutch to British jurisdiction.

During the period of African recruitment which lasted until the 1872 exchange of forts, 3,080 Africans, following Ulzen's example, were taken to Java. There they became known as *Belanda Hitam* or *Blanda Item*, which in Malay means "Black Dutchmen". Most died during their long terms of army service; a few hundred returned to Elmina to relocate in Java Hill, and the remainder settled with their Indonesian wives and Indo-African children in the various garrison towns in Java to enjoy their pensions, thus constituting a small Elmina diaspora. Of his original group of seven, however, only Ulzen was to return to Elmina.

When French missionaries brought Catholicism to Elmina in 1880, Manus Ulzen, who had apparently been baptized in Batavia, was among the first followers. He married Ekua Maria Esson on 10 February 1883. According to Church records, Ulzen was a very active parishioner, serving as church keeper and the person in charge of lighting the candles and looking after the chapel in general.

Corporal Manus Ulzen died in Elmina on 9 January 1887. He left behind a wife and four sons, one of whom was my grandfather Patrick Manus Ulzen. The name Hermanus, from which Manus is derived, is sometimes modified or Fante-ized as "Mends", or abbreviated as "Herm".

Despite the voluminous information in the Dutch sources, a lot of questions concerning Ulzen's life are unanswered. What were his personal views about his military experience in Java and the long, circuitous journey back home? Did he experience racial discrimination either in the East Indies, as did some of his compatriots who followed his footsteps, or in The Netherlands?

Even though Asian textiles were known in West Africa by the nineteenth century through trade, it was a credit to Manus Ulzen and his fellow Java returnees that followed him that the batik prints commonly referred to as "real Dutch wax prints" or "Java prints" have become popular in West African fashion. The Elmina-Java Museum that opened in

2003 houses exhibits on, and is dedicated to, the Ulzen family history.

The very idea of Euro-African is an embodiment of dual heritages and resiliency. These distinguished citizens of Elmina embraced elements of Europeanism while retaining their Africanity to rise to elite positions and roles in society.

Bakatue Festival



Elmina, along with the other Akan groups of coastal and central Ghana with whom they share common social systems, celebrate some well-established ritually-based festivals that are observed with regularity, in accordance with their traditional calendrical systems. Each state observes a major annual festival, such as the Odwira of Asante, that revolves around their major economic activity of agriculture and marks the beginning of their traditional calendar year, not January.

Among the people of Elmina, no festival is more central to the life, economic activity and history of the state than Bakatue, which is celebrated on the first Tuesday of July of every year. The celebration, which is highlighted by a spectacular procession of all the chiefs and subchiefs of the Edina traditional state and culminates in a grand durbar at the banks of the Benya Lagoon, brings together the citizens of Elmina and thousands of visitors who are thrilled by the festivities.

We are not sure how far back the festival goes, but some of the rituals associated with it commemorate the very foundation of the Edina state. It was certainly in full bloom in the 1840s, according to a report by Dutch Governor Cornelis Nagtglas (Doortmont 2007: 285).

The name Bakatue is derived from two Fante words, *baka* (lagoon) and *tue* (draining); hence bakatue means the draining

of the lagoon. Prior to the festival, fishing in the lagoon is banned for a period of three weeks until it is permitted again in one of the ritual acts of the celebration.

Celebrated in July, the festival marks the annual cycle that begins with the fishing season and runs until the next year comes around. It is celebrated on Tuesdays because Tuesdays are considered the day reserved for the sea deity, and as such fishermen do not go to sea that day.

The Bakatue festival is replete with ritual actions that begin weeks before the grand Tuesday festival that climaxes in the procession of the *ɔmanhen* (paramount chief) and chiefs of the Edina State, beginning at the *ɔmanhen's* palace at Akotobinsin and ending at Suekyir on the lagoon bank. The *ɔmanhen* and a few major chiefs ride in palanquins; all the others walk on foot though all are accompanied by their retainers, including stool carriers. During the festival, ritual foods are offered to Nana Benya and prayers are said to the deities for peace and prosperity in the year just concluded and the one about to start. After addresses given by important political figures and the *ɔmanhen's* response, the Benya Komfo (chief priest) casts his net three times into the lagoon. This is immediately followed by declarations ending the prohibitions that had been in place earlier. The ritual actions and official addresses having been completed, the afternoon ends on a lighter note as teams of rowers compete on the lagoon. The day concludes with another procession, this time back towards the *ɔmanhen's* palace.

So, what really happens during this celebration? Why is it celebrated in July? And most importantly, what symbolic meanings does this festival carry for the citizenry, the leaders, and the state?

It is demonstrated in this discussion that the Bakatue festival is a multicoded space for the construction of multiple versions of reality. The spectacle of extraordinary gaiety which involves multiple performance genres of speech, prayer, music and dance—the secular as well as the mundane—

brings together in one grand celebration Edina officialdom and citizenry to construct powerful images of themselves, their common pasts and their anticipated futures. For many, however, Bakatue is one grand carnival-like occasion where individuals can join in the celebration, “do their own thing”, and enjoy a sense of community, unrestrained by the constraints of everyday strictures.

As social anthropologist Victor Turner contended in his concept of *communitas* ([1969] 1995) and which was further expounded by critic Mikhail Bakhtin (1984) in his conceptualization of carnivalesque performance, during gatherings of groups of this kind, participants share a common sense of community that enhances solidarity and allows for the release of pent-up tensions at the same time as they renew their feeling of togetherness. In these atmospheres, structures associated with everyday hierarchies of class, rank and wealth are dissolved and people appear spontaneously undifferentiated and equal, even if momentarily. The feeling thus engendered can be empowering, pleasurable and regenerative.

The festival is preceded by a period of preparatory activities which in the past lasted up to six weeks. Similar to most major ethnic festivals in Ghana, Bakatue is ushered in by an official imposition of bans on various activities: fishing in the lagoon, public wailing at funeral obsequies, drumming and all forms of public noise-making, the selling of fresh herring and new crops, and the pounding of fufu (one of the principal Akan meals) after dark. These prohibitions are announced by means of *dawur* (gong-gong) and are not lifted until the symbolic casting of the net three times in the Benya Lagoon during one of the culminating activities of the festival. Also in the past, cleansing and purification rites for widows were enforced during the period of prohibitions.

Each of the six preparatory weeks is marked by a special ritual or symbolic activity. For example, Week One is marked by two activities; first is what was known in the past as

the “purification of widows”, and second, the “capping” of the sacred Benya *buw* (shrine). With regards to the first, traditionally, widows were required to enter the new era in a state of purity. In the case of the second, a detachable cap on top of the shrine known as Burukutukyew is replaced in a ritual that is performed at midnight. The cap is mounted on a white flag and is said to be symbolic of Elmina’s victory over Fante in the war of 1868.

Week Two is characterized by two activities: a bonfire and an event known as *sosogya*. On Monday, male youths organize a bonfire on the banks of the lagoon, symbolically meant to “burn away” all the ills of the year just ending. On the next day (Tuesday), they organize *sosogya*, a crude event in which they chase away any women they may encounter with pepper-tipped sticks, meant as a punishment for supposed immorality.

Week Three begins on Monday with a key ritual known as *korba butuw*, literally meaning the overturning of the wooden platter. Led by the Ankobea asafo (No. 1), a procession goes to the Benya *buw* (shrine) where rituals involving the sacrifice of a bullock and the pouring of libation are performed. According to tradition, a “password” would be uttered and the appropriate response given before the ritual actions could begin.

Wartemberg (1950: 103) recorded this exchange as follows:

Exclamation: “Dagadu! Nsaaben?” (“Comrades! How do we stand?”)

Response: “Yeye Benya Mba. Hen ara nkonko.” (“We are Benya’s children, pure-blooded; there are no strangers amongst us.”)

Following the libation, the state courtiers known as *birikiwfo* canoe up the river to perform another ritual that culminates in the sounding of the state drums (*aketsewata*) to announce to the 77 deities of Elmina that the period of *koroba butuw* has begun. This marks the onset of the prohibitions

outlined above and the beginning of lean times. The following day (Tuesday) is the turn of the women as they whip any men they encounter with *mpanpan* (local whips) in a retaliatory action.

Week Four is characterized by the first “Dombo” drumming. During a midnight ritual, the first of three drumming ceremonies known as “Dombo” is performed by traditional singers (*apafo*) and drummers before a gathering of the *omanhen* (paramount chief), *ahenfo* (chiefs), state functionaries and a crowd of observers. This ritual action is repeated in Week Five and is known as the second “Dombo”.

Finally, in Week Six, the ritual actions culminate in a ceremony known as *Korbatae*. At midnight on Monday, the eve of Bakatue Tuesday, the Akyemfo asafo No. 2 perform the *Korbatae*, that is, the action of returning the platter to its normal position. This signifies the end of the bans that have been in force since week three, and the ritual is accompanied by all-night drumming in anticipation of the upcoming Bakatue.

All this sounds like a lot of ritual. So what do they mean for individual citizens or the state of Elmina?

Rituals are a feature of all societies from ancient times to the present day. They may be religious, political or may depict other elements. Oaths of allegiance, jury trials in Western societies, Halloween celebrations and even hand-shaking can be ritualistic. According to anthropologist Clifford Geertz, political rituals actually construct power. Therefore, even though the average attendee or participant may be more concerned about the public parade and fun-making activities of Bakatue, each of the ritual actions is laden with symbolic meaning.

Let us take a few illustrative examples. First, what is the symbolic meaning conveyed by the prohibitions and the overturning of the wooden platter/tray? The tray, known in Fante as *korba*, is a key domestic item associated with the transportation, preparation, storage, and consumption

of food. Therefore, overturning one's tray is tantamount to fasting. This, combined with the host of prohibitions on the eating of certain food items, transmits notions of lean times. Coupled with the lean farm productivity generally experienced from late June to early July when the agricultural year is ending but fresh crops are yet to appear, the rituals betoken a kind of Lenten-like period of fasting in anticipation of the contrasting season of plenty that is to be ushered in by the festival of Bakatue, leading to the month of August which is known in the traditional Fante calendar as "Dzifuu" (literally "eating plenty").

In contrast to the citizenry who go through lean times, the deities are offered a bullock and drinks through libations in thanksgiving for guarding over the state through the year just ended, in propitiation for whatever human transgressions may have occurred during the year, and for their guidance in the upcoming year.

When the Bakatue day itself arrives, the anticipation reaches a climax because it is the greatest spectacle in the state of Elmina. As mentioned above, the celebration begins with a grand procession of the paramount chief, all chiefs, subchiefs, asafo companies, traditional priests and all recognized stool heads, each adorned in his official attire and carrying his insignia of office. Elegantly clothed and glittering in enormous jewelry, the chiefs are shielded from the sun by colourful umbrellas, accompanied by their retinues and attendants who sound their special strains or appellations from time to time. As a mark of his elevated status, the Edina omanhen appears last in the procession, carried in a palanquin and wearing a predominantly white cloth, a *nyina* (plant leaf) necklace and a straw hat (*birifikyew*). As I observed elsewhere (2004: 101), the parade "provides a most eloquent testimony to the authority structure in the traditional state and the assigned status of each chief in a hierarchical order". For the observer, however, it is the pageantry and visual magnificence of the procession that are the most impressive.

The procession ends at the bank of the Benya lagoon where the festivities and rituals continue, culminating in the symbolic casting of the net in the lagoon. In modern times, boat racing and other competitive water sports are held to entertain viewers. Groups of colourfully dressed rowers race to the applause of enthusiastic watchers. On the Saturday of Bakatue week, more festivities, including modern-day dances are held.

Another spectacle of the festival is the asafo performance. Each asafo group puts on display elaborate performances, led by their *frankaakitanyi* (flag-bearer). Amidst drumming and music produced by an array of idiophones including horns, bugles, whistles, and rattles that often sound discordant to the uninitiated ear, the groups compete with each other to entertain the audience. They spring into jerky motions and contortions of agility, gesticulating to the crowd.

Bakatue brings into public display the very essence and ethos of the Edina state as no other event, joining together both the political hierarchy and the citizenry in one celebration that is part ritual and part celebratory. It is a dramatization in which revelers experience not only a release from official constraints but also an egalitarian sense of community, bringing together people from all walks of life in a free-for-all celebration.

Amorphous crowds such as are configured at Bakatue festivals, even in their spontaneity, are “richly charged with affects” (Turner 1995: 139). Thus, even in times of economic hardships or political uncertainty, Bakatue celebrates everything imaginable for its participants. It is not only a dramatization of pleasures; it is also a valorization of the very life force of the state. As I concluded elsewhere,

Bakatue is a re-enactment of their history, a conflation of the past and the present. It is an encapsulation of what the state has stood for throughout its history. It is a celebration of state revival and rejuvenation, in an unending cycle linking

the forebears of Elmina through its present inhabitants to its progenitors. It marks the beginning of the new year, bringing with it first fruits and reassuring the people of abundance and the continuation of life (Adjaye 2004: 105).

Bakatue's continual celebration every year offers one more vivid illustration of cultural continuity and resilience in Elmina society.

Economic Organization



The major economic industries of Elmina have remained relatively unchanged through the centuries, the prime industries being fishing and salt production. The main constraints have been the lack of facilities and an absence of any significant infusion of modernization. As such, economic growth has been limited.

Portuguese Trade

Yet, even prior to the coming of the Portuguese, Elmina was already a major trading centre with commercial networks to other coastal towns as well as inland areas. Now, with the arrival of the Portuguese, another dimension of commercial relations developed: maritime trade. Thus the Portuguese were largely instrumental in re-orienting Elmina's trade axis from the overland commerce that was connected all the way to the trans-Saharan routes to trans-Atlantic commerce.

Elmina thence came to serve as a trading post where the Portuguese acquired gold in return for imports such as cloth, copper, gunpowder, textiles, brass, liquor, and later, enslaved Africans. In addition to gold, other important local commodities were fish and salt. The burgeoning maritime trade was served by a flourishing local market.

Thus, one contribution that the Portuguese made in their 150-year relationship was the development of the gold trade and the introduction of new industries. Gold prospecting

was done through alluvial deposits and in some cases even nuggets. Extant surface excavations in Elmina point to the extensive nature of the gold mining operations (DeCorse 35,143). In addition to gold works, prior to coinage, gold dust was a medium of exchange.

Gold was found relatively close to the coast and so the Europeans built and used the fortified castle to secure trade and facilitate the accumulation and storage of gold and other trade items. Alluvial gold was collected along the seashore or found after rains. However, the sources indicate that only small quantities were found locally and that the vast amount of gold was actually brought from inland.

John Vogt's analysis of a recently discovered ledger of Portuguese trade entries from 1529 to 1531 gives us a reliable glimpse into the nature of the commercial activities they engaged in at Elmina prior to the ascendancy of the slave trade subsequently. It must be noted that this document covered only a 27-month period. The entries were recorded by the Portuguese factor Goncalo de Campos during the administrations of Captain-Generals João Vaz Almada (1526-1529) and Estevao da Gama (1529-1532). They are immensely useful because they provide a detailed daily recording of all trade transactions.

According to the entries, there were four broad categories of imports listed in order of importance: first, metal hardware; second, woven fabrics; third, slaves; and fourth, a miscellany of items that included liquor, coris, wooden chests, purses and belts. In terms of percentages, metalware accounted for 50%; fabrics, 25%; slaves 19%; and the miscellaneous items 16%.

Metalware consisted of brass manilas, bowls, chamber pots, shallow pans for prospecting gold, and cooking pots. The majority of these items that the residents of Elmina purchased were melted and recast into objects of local use and design.

Fabrics comprised a variety of cloths, including North African *aljaravias* (bournous), various capes and caps. The most preferred fabric, however, was unfinished finely-woven cotton cloth which could be dyed locally in traditional patterns and colours and sold according to lengths.

As indicated above, this period was prior to the boom of the slave trade and so slaves constituted only the third most important aspect of the Portuguese trade. Merchants, arriving from the mainland, purchased slaves to be used mainly as porters. The Portuguese were also importing slaves from other parts of Africa, particularly Benin and Sao Tomé. According to this ledger, slave imports of 506 and 552 were recorded for the years 1529 and 1530, respectively. The fourth category, miscellaneous items, included *coris*, wooden chests, belts and purses, and was relatively unimportant.

One can conclude from these entries that Portuguese trade was broadly-based and lucrative, based on the recorded values. For example, Vogt (98) calculates that gold receipts totaled 3,263 marks for the 27-month period, that is, an average of approximately 123 marks or 339 kilograms per month.

Imports

Imported ceramics were quite common. Varieties of cloth, including European linen, prints and silks also regularly appeared among the imported items. In some cases, trade materials were either adopted wholesale or modified by the indigenes. This is what is sometimes called “entanglements”.

The British abolition of the slave trade in 1807 stimulated social and economic changes. Now, Birmingham brass, Manchester cotton, and Staffordshire pottery were freely imported, along with the instruments of destruction, namely, gin and guns. With the ascendancy of legitimate commerce in the nineteenth century, forts and castles became less the loci of trade and more sites of administrative centres and military bases.

A wide variety of beads were imported. There was a ready market since beads were used extensively in bodily adornment around wrists, necks, waists and ankles. Archeologist DeCorse (2001) claims that over 800 types and varieties of beads were found in Elmina.

Edinafo (citizens of Elmina), who were already skilled craftsmen, quickly learned new skills from the Portuguese, especially in carving and sculpting. The ingenuity and skills of the people are captured in the aphorism “*Edena botwe eku, Asankoma, katakranka, Aborekyir kaakra, ehu hɔ a ennko, ekɔ hɔ so a, emmba*”. (Elmina, ingenious stone cutters, home of the brave Asankoma; this little Europe which the coward shrinks to enter, and which the daring, on entering no longer desires to go back from).

The Portuguese were the first to introduce fruit and vegetable seedlings that were favourable for growth in the climatic and soil conditions of Elmina. Local methods of cultivation were improved. Oranges, bananas, pineapples, coconuts, sugar cane, melons and plantains were all cultivated in Elmina for supplies to other parts of the country.

Pottery was one of the prime indigenous industries in Elmina, and there is evidence that it was quite profitable in the early days. Clay was molded to produce various domestic receptacles. By the time of the British ascendancy, the industry was in decline, with the importation of cheap enamelware, even though it has survived largely because certain local diets are preferred to be cooked in earthenware.

With the entry of the Dutch from 1637, the European slave trade to the Americas reached its peak. The Dutch recognized that the promotion of the trade depended on the security of the town. They therefore proceeded to construct small fortifications (redoubts) at strategic locations throughout Elmina as follows: Fort Nagtglas at Akotobinsin, Fort Schomerus at St. Joseph’s Hill, Fort Java on Java Hill, Fort Batenstein at Apramdo (New Town), and Fort de Veer at Kuntuntardo.

The Dutch also erected breakwaters on the lagoon and fortified its banks to make for easy navigation of small sailing vessels. In addition, they opened a coaling station for the refueling of ships. Swampy areas were reclaimed and the embankment was extended.

Sugarcane production was re-introduced from the East Indies during the Dutch period. Outlying villages such as Atronkwa, Abena, Amissano and Abee especially took to sugarcane growing, although there are no indications that it blossomed as an industry. Equally modest were attempts at the cultivation of cotton, coffee and cocoa. Major constraints were inadequate support and poor transport facilities. Cattle breeding and poultry farming also saw only a modest boost.

Much more spectacular were strides that Elmina saw in international commerce. Chartered vessels reached Elmina regularly from Europe and America with consigned goods for local merchant princes such as Carl Bartels, Yan Schmidt, Carl de Bordes, Chief Krakue, W. E. Peterson, Carl Dolphyne and Kwesi Bonku (alias Robert Menson).

Following the British take-over after the bombardment of Elmina in 1873, the British largely neglected the town, failing to establish or promote any industries. In consequence, the shipping industry, already in decline since the departure of the Dutch, came to an end with the closure of the port in 1921. In the view of most people of Elmina, the economic heydays of the town coincided with the period between the arrival of the Portuguese and the departure of the Dutch; the British era was the beginning of their current marginalization.

Survival of Old Industries and Economic Resiliency

Salt Production

Salt production is one of the oldest industries in Elmina. Commercial production was done by villages bordering the Benya Lagoon where pits were bored in the earth to allow sea water to collect and then solar evaporation left salt deposits.

For the people of Brenu Akyinmu, Bantoma and other areas in the vicinity of the lagoon and westward along the coast all the way through Ampenyi to Komenda, salt production remained an important and remunerative industry for centuries. Open pit production has survived to the present day. Today, salt and smoked fish continue to be exported from Elmina to inland regions of Ghana and countries to the north.

Traditionally, salt was produced in two ways: open-pan and solar evaporation. Wartemberg noted that in the salt-producing villages, pits were bored deep in the earth to allow percolation of mineral salt deposits in liquid form, which was collected and boiled until after evaporation the salt settled down (72). The salt was extracted from the brine. The more common method of salt extraction and the most cost-effective and productive, however, is by solar evaporation of seawater, which is trapped in open pits. The salt ponds around the Benya lagoon currently employ some 100 people. However, salt is sold as a raw material with little added value.

Fishing

The largest industry by far has remained fishing. The industry has been big enough for Elmina through the ages to supply smoked fish to other parts of the country and beyond. The history of fishing as an industry in Elmina dates back to the 1400s. The industry mostly consists of small-scale or artisan fishing that engages local residents as well as migrants and incorporates subsistence and commercial fishing. The fishermen use mostly traditional techniques which are often more intensive than modern industrial fishing. Fishermen contribute to the economy by providing fish and fish products for both local, domestic consumption and export markets.

Small-scale fishing and related activities provide considerable direct and indirect employment. The Report of the Elmina strategic plan, *The Elmina 2015 Strategy: Building on the Past to Create a Better Future*, a document prepared by the Komenda-Edina-Eguafo-Abrem (KEEA) District Assembly for

the Elmina Cultural Heritage and Management Programme (2003: 86) estimated that 75 per cent of the town's total population of 34,000 derive their livelihood either directly from fishing or indirectly from fishing-related economic activities such as processing, trading or canoe building.

The apparatuses employed by the fishermen have seen little technological innovation over the centuries—large dug-out wooden canoes, purse seine nets, beach seine nets, hooks and lines—even though about 50 per cent of the canoes are now powered by outboard motors.

The Elmina fishing harbor, which is built on the bank of the Benya Lagoon, is the third largest in Ghana, after Tema and Sekondi, which are predominantly industrial or semi-industrially based. Elmina contributes about 15 per cent of Ghana's total fish output, which is significant, even though the fishing families continue to live in poverty.

Although Elmina is the largest traditional harbor in the country, its importance has been declining for decades. It has seen little increase in productivity in recent times. Further, competition from foreign trawlers has also contributed to declining revenues.

The accumulation of silt in the harbor has been a perpetual problem because it impedes the free movement of vessels and boats can enter the lagoon only during high tide. The lagoon has also become polluted over the years, which poses a health risk. The easiest solution is to dredge the lagoon. However, government financial support has been woefully inadequate or inconsistent. Plans for alternatively upgrading the current harbor or constructing a modern one have not been followed through.

There is a modest shipbuilding industry with a capacity of about 30 boats per year produced. It has a good reputation, though, with buyers coming from La Côte D'Ivoire and Togo, even though the technological level is relatively low.

The Fish Market

Right outside the castle, countless traditional fishing boats, or *pirogues*, moor along the shores of the Benya Lagoon. Many of these small vessels are painted with picturesque aphorisms, biblical quotes and witty sayings. After hours spent at sea, the fishermen arrive home to the welcome cheers of young men and women standing on the bridge over the lagoon. The women carry crates of fish, squid and crabs to the market. The catch is sold or smoked on huge racks, or salted and dried. The fishermen tend to sell their catches to specific women groups or individuals. Serious bargaining and negotiations take place at the market. The main catches include *âban* (herring), *sukwei* (thread fish), *âpae* (horse mackerel), *nkanfona* (long-finned herring), *iduei* (barracuda), *wowoyan* (ribbon fish), *asasâw* (shrimps) and *mpatsoa* (tilapia). Despite the overpowering smell of fish, the market is kept relatively clean. Huge slabs of ice are scraped to create shavings, which are then placed on top of the fish to keep them fresh.

Starting in 2003, Elmina, along with foreign investors, began “The Elmina Strategy 2015”, a massive, comprehensive project to improve many aspects of the town, including water drainage, waste management, health improvement, modernization of the fishing industry together with the harbor, tourism development, and improved educational services (see Chapter 12 below).

Despite the advent of modern technology, the fishing industry in Elmina remains relatively traditional. A further limitation comes from the aggressive behavior of Chinese fishermen. Fishermen of Elmina are bravely fighting for survival and for their existence. Some have created cooperatives within which profits are shared equally among the members. This is a kind of grassroots movement without state aid. The market scene presents a refreshing contrast to the gloom of the near-by castle.

Fish provide about 60 per cent of the protein needs of Ghanaians. In recognition of the importance of fishing to the economy and the lives of Ghanaians, the government established a Fisheries College at Anomabo in 2013. Government is also working to import more fishing inputs such as fishing nets and outboard motors. The problem for most fishermen and fishmongers is financing and credit facilities.

Currency

From time immemorial, gold dust and barter had been the prime medium of exchange. Later, and before the Portuguese era, cowries were introduced. During the Dutch period, metal weights for weighing gold dust were introduced as a more accurate method of measurement, and these were later superseded by English coinage at the onset of colonization in the late nineteenth century. Thus, *Kanka* (Dutch) *pesewa* was equated with one (British) penny, *Damba* with two pence, *Teku* with eight pence, *Bendaa* with 7 pounds 4 shillings, and one *predwan* with 8 pounds, 2 shillings.

Despite severe challenges and without significant technical innovation, the traditional industries of fishing and salt-production have survived to the present day. Not only are these local industries resilient, the fishermen are hardy.

Conclusion



“Kanka Hɛn Apa Denaman Ho” (“The Dutch Ship Has Passed Elmina”)

The people of Elmina believe that the deep decline into which their town sank began with the exit of the Dutch in 1872, hence the saying, “*Kanka Hɛn Apa Denaman Ho*” (“The Dutch Ship Has Passed Elmina”). Sure enough, the British signaled their assumption of control of the town by their exile of the *omanhen* (paramount chief) Nana Kɔbina Gyan, followed by their utter destruction of Elmina. Thereafter, the traditional economic activities that had sustained Elmina began to stagnate under British colonial administration as the industries remained relatively undeveloped and limited to the delivery of raw products like fish and salt, to which little value was added. Meanwhile businessmen and entrepreneurs left Elmina for other towns along the coast that were rising, and the neglect and decadence that Elmina suffered continued for decades.

Tourism similarly remained underdeveloped for a long time, even though, according to figures compiled by the Ghana Tourism Board a decade ago, 100,000 guests visited the castle annually, half of whom were foreign visitors. Yet, most either went back to Accra the same day or at best, stayed over for just one night. There was not much to sustain longer stays. Tourist attractions were not adequately developed to

entice visitors to spend money locally. Sites of tourist interest such as the *asafo* posts were in decay. Sanitation facilities were lacking, gutters were choked, and drainage was poor, leading to an overall environment that was not conducive to tourism. Even the surroundings of the castle were not attractive to tourists, not to talk about the occasional harassment by some youths. The beaches were uninviting. Many of the historic houses in the town were in dire need of renovation. (These issues are further discussed in the next chapter.)

“A New Ship Arrives” (“Elmina Strategy 2015”)

Against the background of these difficulties, Elmina recently began to turn the corner in a very dramatic way. On the eve of the 300th anniversary of the commencement of diplomatic relations between Ghana and Europeans, a bold development plan was born in Elmina, the first point of European contact. Centred on the Cultural Heritage and Local Development concept, the plan was built on the principle that cultural heritage could be employed for economic development to improve the lives of the people of Elmina. It is this interconnection between culture and economic development that “The Elmina 2015 Strategy: Building on the Past to Create a Better Future” project was developed. It encompassed an impressive integrated plan based on the belief that renovation of cultural sites by itself is not adequate. If tourists would stay longer and spend more, then tourism should go hand in hand with advancing the development capacity of the people, embracing local artisans and small-scale entrepreneurs. In short, the service industries must also be promoted simultaneously. What was planned therefore was a comprehensive development strategy to revive this historic town, starting from its cultural heritage up. Its success was grounded in involving the local people in a participatory process. The “Elmina 2015 Strategy” thus formulated an integrated plan anchored in five priority sectors: fishing, tourism, health, waste management and education.

A task force identified some 80 related projects aimed at boosting tourism and improving local living conditions. So far, a number of key projects have been successfully accomplished, including repairing the castle's entrance bridge and upper terraces, restoring 15 historic houses in town, renovating the Dutch Cemetery and four asafo posts, and giving a much-needed face-lift to the Nana Kobina Gyan Square in central Elmina. Alongside these developments, the bridge over the lagoon has been rebuilt and dredging of the Benya lagoon has been undertaken. To produce skilled workers, training programmes have been held for local artisans. The training programmes are also part of an effort to ensure that tourism's profits can trickle down to the locals. These projects brought employment opportunities to some 500 locals as all contractors were required to hire a minimum number of local staff. A Chinese-Ghanaian fish processing plant has also been built, providing direct employment to over 150 locals.

There have been other immediate visible outcomes. There has been a noticeable increase in castle visitors and patrons of local businesses such as restaurants. A Tourist Information Centre as well as an Arts and Crafts Market have been opened at Nana Kobina Gyan Square, and signposts have been erected throughout the town. Perceptibly, environmental awareness has increased as locals are now taking better care of their surroundings. Overall, Elmina is vibrant again and more attractive than before. As Dr. Anthony Annan-Prah of the University of Cape Coast and a dedicated citizen of Elmina who has served as the project's local coordinator observed, "in the assessment of the project we should consider that the impact is not only physical. It is also emotional and attitudinal" (17).

The funders, donors and supporters of the "Elmina Strategy 2015" project include the European Union, the Dutch Embassy in Ghana, the National Government, the Edina Traditional Council, the twin cities of Gouda (Netherlands)

and Macon, Georgia (US), the Government of Belgium, the German Development Service, KEEA District Assembly, local hotels, and other investors.

In November 2016, the President of Ghana commissioned a fish-processing plant in Elmina which he said was aimed at making Elmina a centre of fish processing in Ghana. The 11 million dollar project was designed to include a cold store with a capacity of 100 tonnes of fish and reduce post-harvest losses. It is hoped that when completed, the plant would boost the main industry of Elmina, which is fishing. Government is also constructing a sea defense along the Elmina beaches.

Elmina's long slumbering spirits have been awakened. A new Elmina has arisen, filled with vibrancy and optimism. A renaissance is afoot. But even as the "Elmina Strategy 2015" is on the way to becoming a model for local development, it is only a roadmap that has to be sustained. It takes more than a single decade to rebuild a long-suffering and much-neglected town.

Cultural Continuity and Resilience

"Elmina was an old town going down, now it is a new town going up" ("Senior Minister" J. H. Mensah, cited in *"Building on the Past to Create a Better Future"*, 24).

A casual visit would not reveal the full extent of the nature of the European legacy beyond the highly visible two castles, the Dutch Cemetery, street names like Liverpool Street and Marble Stone, some brick stone houses and European-derived images in asafo shrines. The European legacy is far more pervasive and enduring than that.

A listing of names or words of European origin alone is illustrative of how deep this legacy is embedded in our cultural fabric. In the list below, for each of the European periods, an aspect of the linguistic legacy is selected as follows:

Portuguese era: Portuguese-derived loan words in the Fante language, e.g.,

Fante	English	Portuguese
Aspaatser	Shoe	Sapatos
Paanoo	Bread	Latin, panis; Portuguese, paes
Pasar	Walk	Passear
Kosam	Pants	Cuecas (possibly)
Pondo	Bridge	Ponte
Prako	Pig	Porco
Obragye	Oblige (Thanks)	Obrigado
Palaver (Palava)	Speech	Palavra
	Cape Coast	Carbo Corso

Dutch era: Proper names derived from the Dutch, e.g.,

- Aacht.
- Bartels.
- De Bordes.
- De Heer.
- Huydecoper.
- Niezer.
- Rhule.
- Ulzen.
- Van Lare.
- Vanderpuye.
- Vandyke.
- Villars.
- Vroom.

English era: English words that have been Fante-ized, e.g.,

- Asupitsir (hospital).
- Korpotse (coal pot).
- Masta (master).
- Stampo (stamp).
- Towuro (towel).
- Kaa (car).
- Bɔta (butter).
- Doroba (driver).
- Kɔɔpoo (cup).
- Polisi (police).

- Rɔba (rubber).
- Prɛtse (plate).
- Sɔɔtoɔ (assorted).
- Saedin (sardine).
- Brokɔsoo (blockhouse).
- Yarpisii (yard piece).
- Yaafer (Raphael).
- Ntona (St. Anthony).
- Diswɔtse (Elizabeth).
- Serekye (silk).
- Bofrot (boat loaf).

Other evidence of the linguistic legacy of colonialism can be found in the Anglicization of local names that the British demanded when African children entered school. Thus, Kum was changed to Koomson, Okra as Ocran, and Kuntu became Blankson. In general, colonial education relegated the African to an inferior being. It was highly prejudicial to Africa and the African who was made not just to forsake his name, but also despise his culture and disparage his values in favour of those of the West.

Processes of food preparation, eating practices, the kingship institution, belief systems and ritual practices, all indicate cultural continuity not only within Elmina itself but also with the surrounding Akan areas. Despite a considerable degree of foreign infusion the essentials of the social and economic institutions have remained “Elminian”. The asafo companies may have appropriated European-inspired paraphernalia such as trumpets, guns and flags, as have their iconic images on their exclusive posts (aposuban). The shrine of the No. 4 Company, Wombir, which is one of the most spectacular, has images of Adam and Eve to buttress their claim that they were the first asafo in Elmina. Yet, even though large aspects of asafo organization depict European influences, they are nonetheless indigenous in origin, form, and function. The *raison d'être* of asafo companies as military defenders of the state has long disappeared, but the institution continues to

be indispensable in the ritual life of the Elmina state and in practically all ceremonial occasions, a clear indication of the organization's resiliency. Indeed, kings cannot be installed nor can the core annual festivals that underpin the state's existence be performed without the special roles of the asafo companies.

Elmina's traditional life cycle is anchored in two festivals: *Bakatue* in July and *Edina Buronya* in January. The first, *Bakatue*, is linked to the very foundations of the Elmina state. When *edinafo* (citizens of Elmina) come home every year to celebrate this festival, it symbolizes a return not only to their physical roots but also to their spiritual bases. As they immerse themselves in the festivities, they rejuvenate themselves at the same time as the state revives itself. *Edina Buronya* (literally meaning Elmina's Christmas) may have acquired its name from Christian thought, but like the *Bakatue* festival, it is an annual repetitive event that brings the people of Elmina back to their roots. The twin festivals mark the annual cycles of the state, the one signaling the economic calendar which revolves around the fishing season, the other, the social calendar when families take stock of issues affecting them and kin departures in the just-completed year in a gathering known as *Akordo*. Ancient cultures are alive in this ancient town in a highly dynamic and resilient way.

Chieftaincy at the Confluence of Tradition and Modernity

In Chapter 7, we discussed the history of chieftaincy in Elmina, the nature of the institution and the role and position of the chief in society. We return here to the subject of chieftaincy, the most visible aspect of our heritage, in order to assess it in terms of cultural continuity and resilience. In doing so, we raise some related questions: Is chieftaincy antithetical to modernization? Is it outmoded? Are chiefs embodiments of the past rather than the future?

As indicated in Chapter 7, the chief, in Elmina and elsewhere, was the political, social, economic, legal and

military head of the traditional state during the precolonial era. However, chiefs no longer perform these roles today. In a long history of attacks on chiefly power that began with colonial administrations, the independent authority of the chief has been whittled away in favour of the central government through a series of constitutional and administrative actions. In addition, in some cases, the central government circumvented tradition by creating their own chiefs or co-opting them into the colonial administration when they were entrusted with responsibilities for local infrastructural development, all resulting in a diminution of their power. Finally, the Native Authorities Ordinance of 1944 virtually relegated their roles to those of performing ritual actions and traditional functions.

Under the presidency of Kwame Nkrumah the assault on the power of chiefs continued. Richard Rathbone has meticulously chronicled the processes by which the Convention Peoples' Party government of Kwame Nkrumah systematically assaulted chiefly power to the point that in the course of a mere decade (1951-1960) this historic institution was radically altered. Determined to end the fissiparousness of regionalism, Nkrumah's government proceeded on a course aimed at reforming the palpably unsatisfactory local government system, and in the process it severely compromised the authority of traditional rulers.

First, following the Korsah Commission of 1951, the largely unregulated Native Court system was reformed and renamed local courts, with "chiefly benches" being replaced by paid magistrates. Simultaneously, chiefs' control over stool revenues was also whittled away. Further, their role in national politics was marginalized by the creation of regional Houses of Chiefs, which could consider only matters referred to them by government ministers or the national Assembly, and even then their role was virtually limited to proffering advice to government. In the assault on chieftaincy, recalcitrant chiefs could be publicly humiliated and ultimately destooled.

However, in the end, “although independent chieftaincy . . . was most assuredly defeated, chieftaincy itself was not dead” (Rathbone 142). Even though considerably transformed, the institution of chieftaincy has survived against great odds, in part because chiefs continue to “symbolize place” and “pride in locality”; they occupy a particular niche in the long chain of the history of Ghana (Rathbone 164).

However, as I have contended elsewhere (Adjaye and Misawa 2006), even though central government has systematically undermined chieftaincy by attrition and legal actions, the institution is here to stay. “[I]n reality what has happened is not the demise of chieftaincy but rather its transformation” (Adjaye and Misawa: 6). Herein lies the central idea. What needs to happen is for the institution to be reinvented to “fit” the times in Elmina and elsewhere in Ghana since, as we have argued earlier, chieftaincy is a product of historicity (Adjaye and Misawa). It has to be made more relevant to present situations. I insist that chieftaincy is not antithetical to modernization. The office can be transformed beyond the “honorific” and “ceremonial”. Cultural continuity and resilience entail fluidity and responsive transformation.

Recommendations:

- To gain increased acceptability, the occupants of chiefly stools must clean their image and rid themselves of charges of corruption and lack of trust.
- Chiefs must be in a position to renegotiate their position in ways that can make them act effectively as “brokers” in society.
- This implies that the chief becomes an effective link between his district and the central government. He must be capable of entrusting himself “onto the global stage, enabling him to mediate between his district and the world”. He must assume a greater role in initiating innovative programs for educating youngsters and visitors alike in his district on the

significance of local ritual activities and festival celebrations and the role of chiefs in them, for rituals must be seen “not as nostalgic relics of an ancient past, but as instruments for constructing identities, evoking history, and transmitting values” (Adjaye and Misawa: 8). A cultural heritage site as rich as Elmina involves more than the mere and rigid preservation of the past. It requires continuous dialoguing and reinterpretation of the past with a view to making sense of the present while at the same time as it is directed toward facing the challenges of the future, for tradition is doomed to irrelevance if it ceases to meet the needs of the present as well as those of the future.

- Where appropriate, there has to be some form of private continuing education for the chief himself in order to “modernize” him, for, as we concluded elsewhere, “chieftaincy today stands at a delicate confluence of tradition and modernity” (Adjaye and Misawa: 8). If it is to survive into the future and play an effective role on the local and world stage, it has to be transformed, we emphasize, for the institution has not only been deeply inscribed on our political and social landscape for centuries but in some quarters has even been hailed as a more authentic and practical representation of the African political process. For this to happen, however, “it has to be made responsive to the changing forces of modernity for it to survive” (Adjaye and Misawa: 9).

These recommendations apply to everyone in a chiefly position, including the current Elmina *omanhen* who has had an unremarkable and unimpressive reign.

The Elmina Castle and Tourism Development

The Elmina Castle is perhaps the most visible iconic symbol in town. It has survived for over 500 years. It is a visible reminder of a horrific and painful past, but it is also a physical

link to a tumultuous past that the government of Ghana and many citizens believe must not be forgotten or erased. Thus, even as we continue to glorify the European contact and tend to sidestep or minimize its detrimental aspects such as slavery, the negative side of colonial education and the forcible imposition of European values on us, our ability over the years to selectively assimilate positive elements of Westernization while retaining our core Africanness in our socio-economic institutions speak to the enormous power of the resiliency of our cultural heritage.

One movement, “Elmina 2015”, is not adequate to revive a long-stagnated town. It is time for successful sons and daughters of Elmina living in the vast Elmina Diaspora to come together in creative ways to resuscitate their home town and rekindle the image of 'The Little Europe' that glowed in the Dutch era.

Tourism in Ghana is a relatively recent phenomenon. It was not until 1988 that the government identified tourism as one of its strategies for development and began to formulate policies toward the goal of poverty reduction. Yet, after nearly 30 years, it is evident that government's high expectations of tourism as a vehicle for economic development have not yet been met as poverty is still rampant in the major tourist locales of Elmina and Cape Coast.

A number of studies have been undertaken since the 1990s and have concluded that significant problems pervade the industry. The major underlying problems have been identified as follows:

- National tourism development policy is not integrated with macroeconomic policies, or linked with other economic sectors, or are such that take into consideration social and environmental factors.
- Administrative problems including bureaucratic impediments, corruption and ineffective centralized planning, resulting in programmes that serve the interests of a few and disregard the indigenes. Hence,

tourism does not lead to development. It ends up multiplying foreign receipts rather than serving as a means of poverty reduction (Clayton 2003; Koutra and Edwards 2012).

- A further constraint is that in many cases the communities themselves, especially at the grassroots level, either have not been sufficiently involved in the decision-making process, or have a limited understanding of the tourism industry, or lack the confidence to voice their concerns as equal partners to work with policy developers (World Bank Group 2003).
- The way in which the industry has been funded and operated perpetuates a dependency syndrome. So-called “master plan” after “master plan” have revealed that tourism development has been largely orchestrated by foreign developers and often has not reflected local realities. Studies have determined that policy is driven by external, rather than, local needs, a condition related to the colonial legacy whereby the country has been used to producing what is not for local consumption and to consuming what is not produced locally.
- A further constraint is residents’ negative attitudes toward tourism. In their study of residents’ attitudes towards tourism in Cape Coast and Elmina, Victor Teye and his colleagues (2002) concluded that there is some degree of resentment among significant sections of local residents towards both tourism development and the tourists themselves. Even though Ghanaians generally welcome tourists, Bruner similarly observed in focus groups discussions that many entertain views that some tourists are “ruffians”, “dirty”, “drug addicts,” indecent in appearance and engage in “shocking” behaviour (1996: 298).
- The ways in which visits to the region are organized

by tourist companies. Most of these companies are based in Accra and organize the tours as same-day packages. The limited stay is attributable to the fact that the local attractions can be toured in one day.

- Other limitations affecting tourism include the fact that the beaches are yet to be developed; infrastructural development to support tourism is basic; wages in tourism are low; working conditions are deplorable; job availability is limited to hotels, restaurants and bars; and, above all, the negative attitude of persons working in tourism and its related industries.
- Lack of communication between the Elmina chiefs and the regional planning agency in Cape Coast. Bruner observed that the Edina Council of Chiefs accused the regional planning agency—the Central Region Development Commission—of “not informing them of its plans for tourism development, even though that development is taking place in their area of jurisdiction” (1996: 297). Another sore point is that the chiefs contend that the land on which Elmina Castle is located is stool land and therefore they should be paid rent (royalties).

Further Recommendations

Koutra and Edwards (2012) concluded in their study that the primary cause of this state of affairs is the lack of capacity building; social, human, physical, and financial. The study undertook a critical review of the interaction among all the key interest groups, individuals, businesses, networks, organizations, and policy institutions, both at national and supra-national levels, namely, the local Elmina community (grassroots), the national institutions (Ministry of Tourism, Ghana Museum and Monuments Boards [GMMB], Ghana Tourism Board [GTB], the local university [University of Cape Coast], the tourism intermediaries [tour operators], external state development institutions [donor agencies], and the

managers of the castles, in order to establish the nature of the controlling interests in the projects. In particular, the role of stakeholders was critically reviewed.

In their analysis, they recommended that tourism development must be based on an integrated policy that is grounded on social capital, human capital, physical capital, and financial capital (Koutra and Edwards 2012). While definitions vary, the following are generally accepted:

“Social Capital” focuses on social relations that have productive benefits, that is, the collective value of all social networks. The central premise is that social networks have value. Koutra and Edwards (2012) emphasize that community participation is a prerequisite for sustainable tourism development. In their focus group survey, participant after participant bemoaned the fact that local people have no say in the decision-making process and have to fight for inclusion. Yet, putting local needs first through participatory approaches that make them realize that tourism is an alternate means of survival leads to empowerment and a sense of ownership.

Networks and partnerships are essential elements in the development and sustainability of tourism. “The starting point for the establishment of partnerships and networks in the locales should be an open and constructive dialogue based on trust,” Koutra and Edwards (786) emphasized.

“Human capital” refers to the stock of knowledge, habits, social and personality attributes, including creativity, embodied in the ability to perform so as to produce economic value. Human resource training is critical; thorough knowledge of relevant information, planning, marketing, dissemination and evaluation is essential. The point is that tourism sustainability can be better achieved if people know and understand the importance of sustainability.

Participants in other well-documented studies have complained about too much corruption and the fact that the money never reaches the local community. If transparency and accountability increase, local communities would be

motivated to play a more active role in their own development. Moreover, tourism boards are not decentralized.

“Physical capital” consists of machinery, buildings, computers, and the like, as well as nonhuman assets, infrastructural capital (roads, telecommunications, etc.) and natural assets such as the environment. Tourism is a highly competitive industry and therefore infrastructural development is critical, especially in the provision of sanitation needs, water supply, drainage access and easy and affordable transportation. I have toured many parts of the world and have been amazed at the ability with which some countries with very little in terms of natural assets have been able to maximize them into huge tourist successes.

Other limitations include the lack of skills, formal education and training that have hampered tourism development. Further, participant and direct observation indicated that the absence of a proper solid waste system is deplorable and the unsanitary state of the environment is a severe drawback.

“Financial capital” refers to the capacity to access funds from bank deposits. In Ghana, micro-finance credit mechanisms are very important. Yet, there is inadequate domestic and international investment for tourism development and therefore poverty reduction. There is very little investment by state and donor agencies in labor, commercial activities, skills, knowledge and services related to tourism. Funds are unavailable for training and education. In a relationship of dependency, donor agencies serve their own interests. Poverty itself is an obstacle to accessing loans since in many cases the poor are unable to satisfy collateral requirements. Small businesses do not have the skills, resources or expertise to compete with international agencies.

Since the tourist industry has been touted as the most important single agency in the economic development of Elmina, I would like to end this discussion with a concluding note on tourism. Considering the constantly changing face of tourism “the needs of consumers and those of local

communities, the flexibility and adaptability of any scheme to local level conditions is of utmost importance. Consultation, and any form of advice, has to reflect not just the global environment, but must also be translated into the local 'language', and have long-term vision" (Koutra and Edwards: 782).

It cannot be overemphasized that a prerequisite for achieving poverty reduction is the equal distribution of benefits, and the most effective way of realizing this goal is to incorporate tourism into other sectors of the economy such as transportation, services, agriculture, fisheries, etc. Short-term solutions and availability of funds without investing in building capacities at the local level will not bear fruit.

"The right tourism product can only be developed if planners and developers are synchronized with the local communities, especially those at the grassroots level, and the decisions taken are in harmony with values that reflect the culture and traditions of the society" (Koutra and Edwards 2012: 782). Tourism cannot continue to benefit only a privileged few while the vast majority of people, especially the residents of the tourist areas, remain poor.

Notwithstanding the tremendous economic and social problems currently facing Elmina, the town was, and will remain, in its citizens' imagery as *Aborekyir Kaakra*, 'The Little Europe'.

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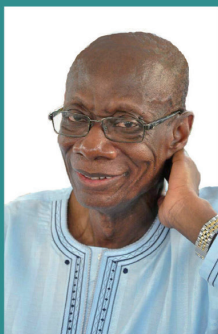
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over 400 invited lectures in cities and at campuses throughout the world and is a recipient of numerous prestigious awards including Fulbrights, National Endowment for the Humanities and Hewlett.

ABOUT THE BOOK

This is a brief introduction to the history of Elmina, its castle, the people, and their traditions. It outlines the town's 500-year relations with Europeans, highlighting the transformations that have developed out of these interactions. Written by one of the top historians of Ghana and a leading scholar of the African diaspora, the book is not only based on original archival information and orally-derived sources, but is also richly informed by the writer's own personal knowledge as a Nyampa Safohen and citizen of Elmina. Despite the tremendous changes engendered by the European contact, Elmina's historical development demonstrates an amazing degree of cultural continuity and resilience in its political institutions, social organization, economic systems and worldview.

*"... it illuminates the town's remarkable historical trajectory of growth and advancement to become the first modern metropolis in West Africa, for which it was dubbed **Aborekyir Kaakra** ('Little Europe')."*

Dr. Nana Ato Arthur, Head, Office of the Head of Local Government Service, Accra, Ghana, Former District Chief Executive, KEEA.

"Professor Adjaye not only shows an astonishing depth of knowledge...; he also lends such fresh and rare perspectives to Elmina's history of interactions with Europeans as well as its dynamic culture as only a son of the "soil" is capable of providing."

Professor Robert Addo-Fening, formerly of the History Department, University of Ghana, Legon.

"This compelling book on Elmina is a 'must-read' for tourists, basic, secondary and tertiary institutions, as well as individuals interested in the dynamics of social transformation."

Dr. Brigid Maa Sackey, Professor of Anthropology, University of Ghana, Legon.



ISBN 978-9988-550-96-7



9 789988 550967



Elmina Castle



The main courtyard, Elmina Castle



Entrance to Elmina Castle



Elmina Castle from a distance



"The Door of No Return", Elmina Castle



Male slave Dungeon



Fort St.Jago (Coenraadsburg)

Fort St. Jago, originally named Fort Coenraadsburg, originated as a chapel constructed by the Portuguese between 1555 and 1558, which was later converted to a lodge and watch tower.

Built atop the hill that came to be known as Jago Hill, its primary purpose was to provide military protection for near-by St. George's Castle, and so at the beginning the fort had only military quarters and no commercial warehouses.

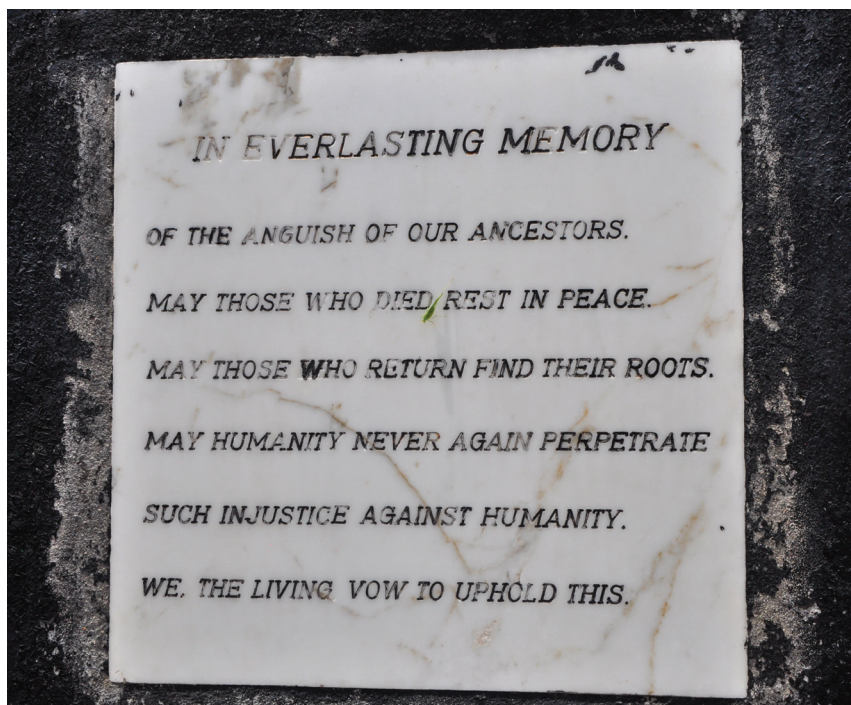
After the Dutch capture of 1637, they fortified it to protect their participation in the slave trade while they also used it as a prison for European convicts and disobedient officers.

After the Dutch ceded it to the British in 1872, they added some alterations which enabled the fort to be put to civilian use.

In the 19th and 20th centuries it functioned mainly as a police academy, a prison and a hospital.

In the 1970s, it was used as a low-budget hotel.

Like Elmina Castle, Fort St. Jago is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



An inscription honouring the memory of victims of slavery



Posuban (Shrine) of No. 4 Asafo Company, Wombir



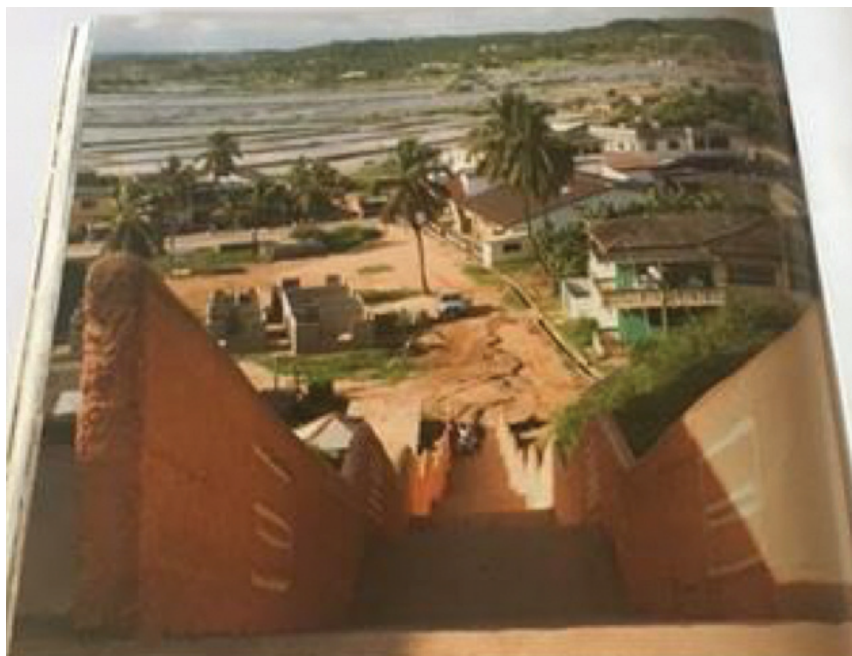
Posuban (Shrine) of No. 5 Asafo Company, Abese



Dutch Cemetery



Pieter van Dijke, born ca. 1740 in Elmina
Son of Jacob, he was educated in Holland, returned to Elmina in 1761
and became a successful entrepreneur.



Java Hill



Fishing harbour, with Fort Jago in the background



Renovated Ephson Aku House. Inset top left: before renovation



Renovated Van Dijke House



Statute of Nana Kobina Gyan I
1868-73, exiled by the British to Sierra Leone 1873, repatriated and
re-enstooled 1898-1901



Nana Kobina Gyan I Square

